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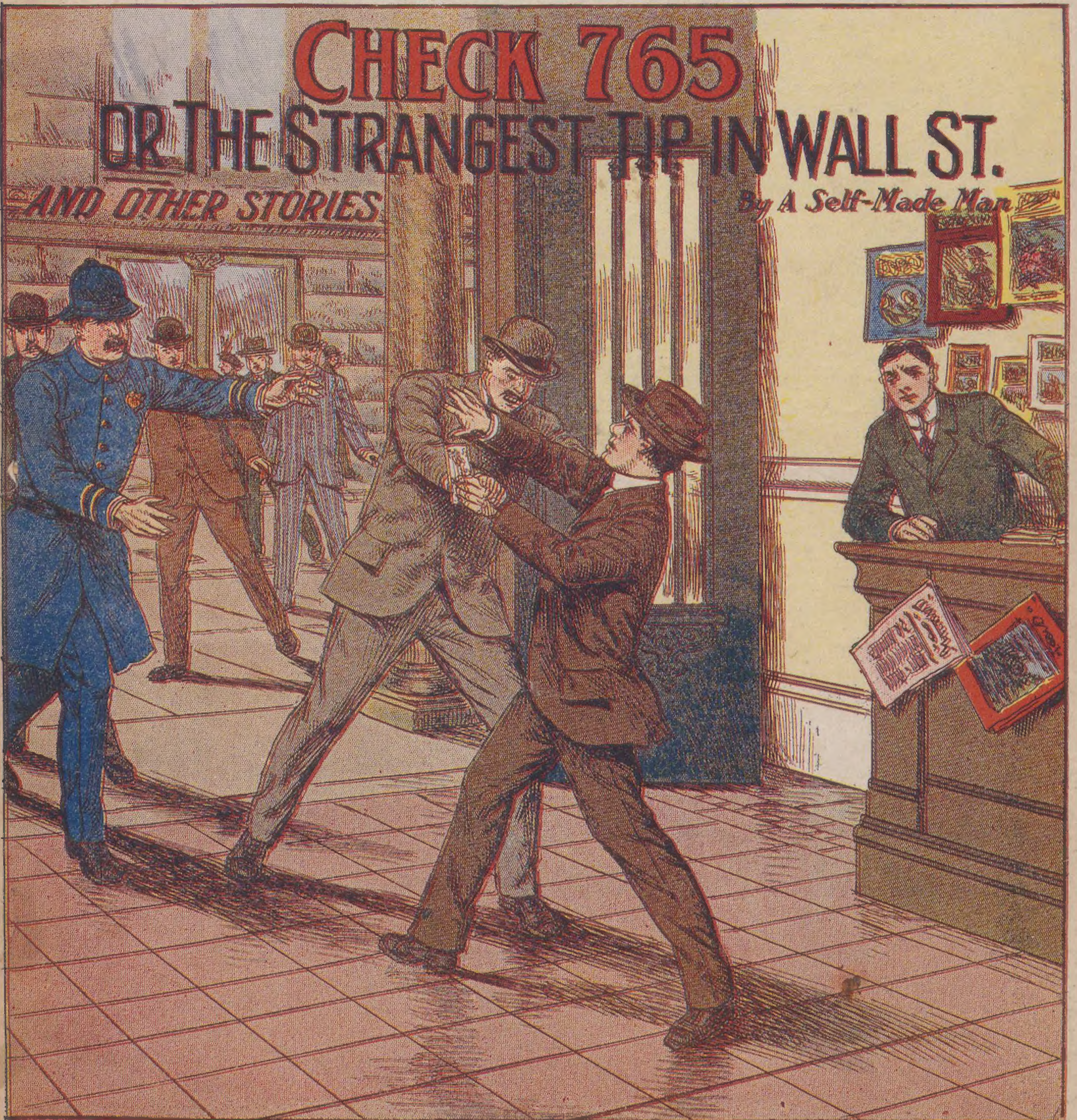
STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY.

CHECK 765

OR THE STRANGEST TIP IN WALL ST.

AND OTHER STORIES

By A Self-Made Man



"Ha! where did you get that check?" cried Nostrand, seizing hold of the boy. "Give it to me. It is mine." "No, it is not yours, and you sha'n't have it," replied Joe. The struggle that ensued attracted a policeman.

Fame and Fortune Weekly

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY

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Price 5 Cents.

CHECK 765

OR,

THE STRANGEST TIP IN WALL STREET

By A SELF-MADE MAN

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCES JOE STURGESS.

"Is my father in?" said a sweet voice in the ear of Joe Sturgess one morning as he sat in his chair absorbed in the perusal of the latest financial intelligence in the columns of the Daily Argus.

Joe, who was office boy and messenger to Nathaniel Drew, a stock broker of some prominence in Wall Street, sprang on his feet and faced Miss Grace Drew, his employer's only daughter and heiress, a very pretty miss of fifteen, who had entered the reception-room unperceived by him.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Drew, I didn't notice you come in. Yes, your father is in, but he is engaged with a bank director and cannot be disturbed. Will you take a seat?"

"It's a lovely day, isn't it?" said the young lady as she took the chair next to Joe's.

"Yes, though I haven't noticed it in particular. In one sense all days are alike to us messengers. We have to hustle around delivering messages whether it's fine or stormy. Business goes on in Wall Street even if a blizzard is tearing things up generally. You'll excuse me if I say you are looking fine."

"Do you think so?" she said, with a coquettish smile.

"With the evidence before me I can't help thinking so."

"I am afraid you are a flatterer, Joe Sturgess."

"I'll admit that I can jolly some people, but as for you, Miss Drew, it is quite impossible to flatter you. You're the real thing—twenty-four carat fine."

"Really—you are extremely complimentary."

"To change the subject, I understand that you, with your father, of course, have moved from your town house to your villa on the Hudson."

"That's true. We went last week and there is no one in our Madison avenue house now but one servant, who looks after the place."

"I suppose the change is very agreeable to you?"

"Quite so. I do love the country. We have a nice place, about a mile beyond the village. I am going to ask my father to invite you up there to spend your vacation week when it comes around."

"That's kind of you, Miss Drew. I'm pretty solid with your father, but I'm afraid he'll draw a line at inviting me to his country place."

"Oh, but I'll ask him. He never refuses me anything."

"You are fortunate."

At that moment the door of the private room opened and Mr. Drew came out with his visitor, whom he saw to the outer door.

When he returned, his daughter met him and they went in side together.

In a few minutes the cashier sent Joe out on an errand.

He carried a note to a broker in Exchange place.

As he went in at the main entrance a trader named Nostrand came out in a hurry, and they came together with a bump.

"Why don't you look where you're going?" cried Nostrand, giving him a shove to one side.

"I didn't see you," retorted Joe.

"It's your business to keep your eyes open."

"You ought to have used your eyes, too," answered the boy, walking toward the elevator that was about to start up.

"That's Drew's boy. I'll report him," growled Nostrand, as he went on down the street.

Joe delivered his note and started back.

As ill-luck would have it, as he swung around into Broad street he came smack against Broker Nostrand again, knocking off that man's derby.

"I beg your pardon!" said Joe, stooping to pick up the hat.

Nostrand, as mad as a hornet, raised his foot and kicked at the boy, who was in a tempting position at the moment.

Joe, however, saw the foot coming and grabbed it with one hand, at the same time rising up.

Nostrand lost his balance and went down on his back with some force.

Naturally, the incident attracted some notice, and the laugh was on the broker.

Joe had not meant to upset him, and offered his hand to assist him to rise.

The trader refused it, got up unassisted, seized his hat and then handed the boy a heavy slap on the face which made his cheek tingle.

The crack made Joe mad, for he had been given no chance to avoid it.

The appearance of a policeman coming that way put an end to what might have been a scene, and Joe kept on his way.

"He's a loafer to hit me that way," said the boy as he hurried along. "I didn't see him that time, either. He came around the corner before I knew there was any one in my path. It's funny I should bump into him twice within half an hour. If he hadn't kicked at me he wouldn't have landed on his back. After that slap I'd have no sympathy for him if he had cracked his head."

When Joe reached the office he was sent out again almost immediately.

This time his errand took him to New street.

He returned by way of Exchange place and Broad street.

In front of the Stock Exchange he saw Mr. Drew and his daughter talking with Nostrand.

An Italian image vendor was coming along, with a board full of plaster-of-Paris figures on his head.

A passing A. D. T. messenger shied the core of an apple in his eye.

The vendor turned, with an angry exclamation, and the end of his board swept Nostrand's derby from his head.

The broker gave him an angry shove and then stooped for his hat.

The hat rolled toward Joe, and he instinctively stooped for it, too.

Their heads came together with a crack that made them both see stars.

Nostrand saw several planets in addition, for the larger part of the Italian's stock in trade descended on his head and shoulders and he stumbled to the sidewalk, presenting a ridiculous figure in the midst of the wreck he had brought about.

The Italian, with a roar of rage over his demoralized property, drew a knife and made a lunge at the broker.

Nostrand would have caught several inches of it but for Joe, who seized the man's wrist and held it.

A crowd gathered and much excitement ensued.

The Italian was disarmed and held a prisoner by two other brokers.

Joe assisted Nostrand to rise.

When the broker saw to whom he was indebted he showed his gratitude by shoving the boy roughly away.

Mr. Drew and Grace, who stood but a few feet away and saw what Joe had done, were much surprised at Nostrand's action, and the girl's face flushed indignantly.

"Thank you, sir," said Joe, sarcastically.

Then he lifted his hat to Grace and pushed his way out of the crowd.

"They say things run in threes," he muttered. "Evidently there is some truth in the saying, for this is the third time I've run up against Nostrand in a short time. He's a gentleman, I don't think. I saved him from getting a nasty poke from the Italian's knife, and helped him up. All the thanks I got was a rough shove. He ought to be made to pay for those images, though by drawing his knife the Italian is not entitled to much sympathy. He'll be arrested and punished for that, I guess, and I'm liable to be brought into the case as a witness. This seems to be one of my strenuous days."

Joe duly reported to the cashier and was sent out with another message.

Nothing happened on that trip.

On his way back he met a particular friend of his named Dick Singleton.

"Hello, Joe! You're just the chap I wanted to see," said Dick.

"You're got your wish. What can I do for you? If you want to touch me for a fiver I'll accommodate you with pleasure," grinned Joe.

"Nothing of the sort. When did I ever ask you for a loan?"

"Your memory is short. A week ago you borrowed——"

"A nickel. I recall the fact, and also that I haven't paid you. Here it is. Now listen, I've a tip for you."

"A tip, eh? Elucidate."

"It's worth ten per cent. of the profits."

"You shall have it if there's anything in it."

"A. & C. is about to take on a boom."

"Who gave you that valuable inside news?"

"Nobody gave it to me. They wouldn't be such a fool. I picked it up."

"Lucky boy. How?"

"In an office I visited an hour ago."

"Let's have the facts."

Dick gave them.

"It looks pretty good," said Joe.

"It's a regular eighteen-carat cinch. If I had the money I'd go in for the limit. You have money, so get in yourself, and when you cash in on the profit kindly remember yours truly to the extent of the promised ten per cent."

"I'll consider it," said Joe, and the boys separated.

CHAPTER II.

JOE UNDERTAKES A MISSION FOR A STRANGER.

Joe, after some consideration, decided to get in on A. & C., so at the first chance he visited the little bank on Nassau street and put up nearly all his funds as marginal security on 50 shares, at 80.

Dick's information indicated that a syndicate was behind the stock, and that if the combine succeeded in carrying out its plans the price was likely to go to par.

That afternoon Joe was sent to deliver a package containing a dozen \$100 bonds belonging to a certain industrial company to a firm of Jersey City brokers.

It was a disagreeable day, raining at intervals, and when the boy left the office the atmosphere was thick with mist that seemed to be the precursor of a still thicker fog.

With his overcoat buttoned up about his throat, his soft hat pulled down close above his eyes, and an umbrella in his hand, Joe started for the ferry.

He passed a hurrying throng of persons out on business and finally reached Cortlandt street, down which he walked rapidly to West street, crossed that wide thoroughfare, entered the ferry-house and boarded the boat which was just about to start across the river.

He went out in front at first, for he didn't relish the stuffy air of the men's cabin, but after the boat started the rain came on again and made the exposed part of the boat undesirable, so he retreated to a spot just outside the cabin door.

Here he found a sallow-featured man, with a black mustache, hugging the corner.

"Nasty day," said the man, looking sharply at Joe.

"Very," answered the boy.

"Going across the river on business, I suppose?"

"I wouldn't go across to-day for any other reason."

"Are you acquainted in Jersey City?"

"Only around the business section where the mining brokers are."

"Do you work in Wall Street?"

"Yes."

"For a broker?"

"Yes."

"Have an easy snap, I suppose?"

"Nothing easy about it except the hours."

"How many hours do you work?"

"About seven."

"Get good pay?"

"Very fair."

"What do you do?"

Joe gave him a general idea of his duties.

"Are you off for the day after this errand you're on?"

"Yes."

"Got to go back to the office and report?"

"No."

"Want to earn ten dollars?"

Joe looked at the man in surprise.

"What doing?" he asked.

"I want to send an important package to a house on the Hackensack River, near the railroad bridge. I'll give you ten dollars if you deliver it."

"You can hire a regular messenger boy to take it for less than that."

"I know it, but the boy might be a careless one and lose the package."

"The company will be responsible for the package."

"You're a Wall Street boy, and I can see you're smart. I'd rather trust you than an ordinary messenger."

"I don't know that I care to go out to that place on such a day."

"Not for ten dollars?"

"It's worth every cent of it. What is the number and street?"

"The house has no number. It is the only building of any size close to the river on this side of the bridge. The street is not cut through."

"Then it will be tough walking?"

"It's only about a quarter of a mile from the nearest trolley line. All you'll have to do will be to follow the river to the house. You will be able to ride all the way to the river, so, unless it should rain hard, the walk will amount to nothing to you. All you have to do will be to hand the package to the person who answers the door-bell."

Joe considered the offer.

It seemed an odd one to come from an entire stranger.

"You say the package is an important one?"

"Yes."

"How is it you are willing to trust it to me? You don't know me."

"You must give me your name and the name of your boss in Wall Street. I will accompany you where you are bound to make sure you're all right. That will be enough for me."

"How about the ten dollars?"

"I'll pay you in advance, and I'll give you a quarter for your expenses."

"What's your name, and where is your place of business?"

"I am not in business. I am from Chicago and am stopping at the St. Denis Hotel on Broadway. My name is John Downey."

"Then you are a stranger in this locality?"

"Yes. I've only been East two days."

"I suppose you want me to bring you a receipt for the package?"

"Perhaps you had better," said the man, after a pause. "Put it in an envelope and mail it to me at the hotel."

Joe hadn't actually agreed to carry the package to the house, but the man appeared to take that for granted, for the boy's words indicated that he would go on the errand.

By this time the boat glided into her slip and the passengers had disembarked.

The rain had stopped so that umbrellas were not needed.

"You'll take the package?" said the man, as they stepped out of the ferry building.

"Yes, I guess so. I might as well make the money, as I have nothing else on hand," replied Joe.

"Then I'll go along with you," said Downey.

They went to the neighborhood where the Jersey City brokers had their offices, and Joe delivered his package, taking a receipt for it.

The boy expected the man would ask a question or two about him or the clerk who took the package, but he didn't.

He appeared to be satisfied that Joe was all right.

When they came out into the corridor the man pulled a fairly weighty package from under his overcoat and handed it to Joe.

"Be careful not to drop it," he said.

"No danger of that," returned Joe.

"Here's \$10 and a quarter. If the man gives you a receipt, mail it; otherwise it won't matter. I'll know by to-morrow night if he got it all right, and as I have a line on you I feel safe enough."

They separated at the street door and Joe made his way to a line of cars that would take him close to his destination if the man's directions were right.

As he rode along the gloom of the afternoon deepened, and the mist grew thicker, but the rain did not come on again.

Joe had been out to the Hackensack River before and had a general idea of Jersey City in that direction.

At the time of which we write the houses were not very numerous in the section between the trolley line Joe took and the railroad bridge to the south.

In places where building operations were going on the streets were cut through to within a couple of blocks of the river, but in other places the streets ceased further in.

Walking was not very good at any time, but Joe expected to find it pretty rocky on that occasion.

As he was provided with arctics, he guessed he could manage to get along all right.

As the car approached the river he asked the conductor if he knew anything about the house he was bound for, but the man didn't.

"It's on the river between here and the railroad bridge. What's the best way to go in that direction?" asked Joe.

"I don't know of any best way. You'll have to cross the ground as best you can. You'll find it sloppy, I guess. You know the house, I suppose?"

"It's the only one of any size near the river, so I can't very well miss it."

"How far over is it?"

"About a quarter of a mile, I understand."

"You want to get off near the bridge?"

"Yes."

In less than ten minutes Joe stepped off the car, the conductor, with a grin, wishing him good luck.

The mist, having an unobstructed sway out there, appeared to be thicker than the boy had noticed while riding through the streets.

He had found out from the conductor that it was twenty minutes of five, but the gloom of the afternoon made it look an hour later.

He could see objects of any size only a short way ahead, though the trolley car, when close at hand, looked plain enough with its lights.

Joe watched it recede across the bridge, then he turned resolutely to the task ahead of him.

"Ten dollars isn't too much to pay a fellow for coming out here on such an afternoon. Still, as it is equal to a week's wages for me, I thought I wouldn't let it get by me. I rather

like to undertake the unusual—that with the ten dollars made it something of an inducement," thought Joe, as he trudged across the uncertain ground.

When he had gone what he judged to be a quarter of a mile he began looking for the house, but saw nothing of the kind, for the mist and the gloom blotted things out all around him.

Keeping as near the line of the river, which he could not see, as he thought it prudent to go he kept on.

He expected there would be one or more lights in the house that would serve to guide him there, but not a glimmer could he make out in all the neighborhood around.

"I guess I'll earn the ten dollars all right," he said.

After tramping what he believed was another quarter of a mile he saw something dark looming up ahead.

"I believe that's the house now," he said. "I hope so, for I'm getting sick of this job. It's a wonder they wouldn't show a light. Perhaps the rooms that are lighted are on the other side. I can't think why anybody would care to live away out here unless they owned the house and couldn't get their price for it. It must be an old building, but it's like living on a country farm to be so far away from the stores. Well, there is no accounting for some people's tastes."

Joe walked straight toward the dark patch which showed itself in patches through the mist, and it gradually assumed the outlines of a good-sized three-story mansion, with a cupola on top.

It was surrounded by a rusty iron fence which the boy almost ran into before he discovered it.

A gate was affixed to two stone pillars, and was intended to open from the center.

One side stood slightly ajar, and pushing it open Joe entered the barren-looking grounds.

A carriageway formed of small pebbles led up to a wide porch and the front door.

Weeds and rank grass sprouted out of this, showing that the place was grossly neglected by the occupants.

Joe stepped on the porch and looked for the bell-handle.

He found it, gave it a pull and it came away in his hand.

"Well," muttered the boy, "this place seems to be falling to pieces."

He noticed that something had dropped when the bell gave away, so he struck a match to see what it was.

It proved to be a card bearing the words, "Bell out of order."

"I should say it was out of order," thought the Wall Street youth.

Underneath the foregoing words something else was written.

Looking closer he saw it said, "Come around to the back door."

He laid the handle of the door-bell down and started for the rear of the house.

As he passed the last of four wide windows a light suddenly flashed up inside the room.

It came so unexpectedly that Joe stopped and looked in through the window.

The light came from a match held in the fingers of a man attired in a smart business suit.

In his other hand he had a candlestick, and by the time Joe had taken in his personality he lit the candle.

Then he turned and held the light above a motionless object stretched out as stiff as a log of wood on a table.

Joe's gaze rested on the object, and he uttered a gasp.

The figure was that of a man, and his set, white face showed he was a corpse.

CHAPTER III.

THE CONVERSATION JOE HEARD.

"My gracious! A dead man!" ejaculated Joe, quite startled by the sight.

At that point a second man entered the room.

He was not a pleasant-looking individual.

He had a bullet-shaped head which was covered with a shock of coarse, red hair.

His sandy features were strongly pock-marked and his nose showed the effect of a heavy blow which had knocked it out of shape.

He wore a sack-coat, trousers to match, both of a brownish stuff, and a checked shirt.

He had no collar or tie and was unshaven.

"Do you think he'll do, after sundry alterations, I mean?" asked the newcomer of the other, in a hoarse voice.

The words came so clear to Joe's ear that he was surprised until he observed that the window-sash was up an inch.

"He is the right height and build. If his teeth are good he'll answer," replied the other.

"His teeth are all right. If they weren't, what good would he be? His identification depends mostly on his teeth after they've been fixed to suit."

"Of course," said the man in the business suit. "He'll do. After the fire has done its work there will be just enough left of him for the insurance people to pass upon."

"If they accept the identification—"

"You, Jim and I will divide a fat boodle between us."

"I wish that package would come that Jim was to send, then we could get to work on the stiff and fix him up for the test."

"He said he'd send it by an A. D. T. messenger. On such an afternoon as this the boy will probably have some trouble in finding the house."

"If he did the right thing he'd fetch it out himself. I don't believe in trustin' anythin' to outside parties."

"Whatever Jim does will be all right," said the other.

"I hope so," grumbled the other, "but this here job stands for a long term if we're caught at it."

"You're forever seeing things on the worst side, Fletcher. If the job is put through right there's small chance of matters going wrong. By the way, how did you manage to get such a good subject for our operations?"

"I've been visitin' the morgue right along disguised as an old white-haired man who was lookin' for his brother who had disappeared mysteriously and was believed to have committed suicide. When I went there this noon and seen this chap, who had just been fetched in, I identified him as my brother and claimed him."

"Have any trouble getting him?"

"Not the slightest. The keeper was glad to get him off his hands."

"Who is he? Do you know?"

"No. He had nothin' in his pockets when found, fortunately. That made it easy for me."

"Nothing, eh?"

"Nothin' except a cancelled check."

"A cancelled check?"

"Yes. For ten dollars, made out to bearer and signed by a name I couldn't make out, for it looked as if a hen had made it with its feet diggin' gravel."

"Where is the check?"

The other man went to the mantelpiece, took something off it and handed it to the party in the business suit.

He looked at it curiously, turned it over and consulted the endorsement, holding it to the light.

Joe, who was immensely interested, not to say surprised, by all he heard, easily saw that it was a bank check, and that it bore the perforation of the bank which had cashed it.

"It's made out on the Goldfield National Bank," said the well-dressed man. "This stranger must be from the West. Being drawn to self, I opine that the name attached to it is his, which indicates that he had an account at the bank. How came he to reach the morgue? He looks as if he had met a sudden death, but not from violence."

"Dropped dead on the street and the police sent him to the morgue."

"Heart failure, I suppose? A mighty healthy-looking stiff to have had anything the matter with his heart."

"The surgeon who examined him at the police station said he had been a hard drinker, and a fellow of that stamp is always liable to give out suddenly."

"The morgue-keeper told you that?"

"It was written down on a card, and it helped me out."

"How?"

"When I first went there lookin' for a subject, I told the keeper that my brother was a drinker and I feared he had done away with himself while under the influence."

"How came you to say that?"

"Because I figured that drink brought more stiffs to the morgue than anythin' else."

"You've got a clever head, Fletcher."

"What's a fellow's nut good for if he doesn't use it?"

"You say you found the check in his pocket?"

"It wasn't exactly in his pocket. It was sewed in the linin' of his pants."

"How came you to discover that?"

"I felt somethin' through the cloth, investigated and found the check."

"Then the morgue-keeper didn't know it was there?"

"I reckon not, for they take everythin' out of a corpse's clothes to use for purposes of identification."

"So I thought; that's why I asked. The check, I see, is

Number 765, which shows that the signer of the check was a depositor of the bank for some time."

"I don't see that the check cuts much ice. It won't do us no good."

"Not if it was for a million, for it has passed through the bank and is stamped paid. You'd better burn it up, for it might prove an awkward clew if picked up by somebody and forwarded to the bank. If the man has friends out in Goldfield, as is most probable, the bank would probably call the attention of one of them to the receipt of the cancelled check from the East, a rather singular matter, and the friend, suspecting something might be wrong with the man from Goldfield, might start an investigation which would possibly lead to the morgue. The claiming of the body by an alleged brother might then be regarded as suspicious by the police, particularly if it developed that the dead man had no brother."

"I'll get rid of it," said the other, "don't you worry. I'm not goin' to keep anythin' belongin' to the corpse that isn't of value."

"Well, I've seen all I want of this stiff. We'll leave him until the package gets here," said the man in the business suit.

The two men then left the room, taking the candle with them.

"I wonder what's the game?" Joe asked himself. "There is some scheme in the wind, and it seems to be directed against insurance people. It strikes me that these men have insured somebody's life for a good amount and are going to collect the money, if they can, by reporting him to be dead. The corpse they have in that room is to be palmed off as the insured man. He is as close a copy as they could get hold of, but apparently not close enough to make their scheme certain, so they are going to make some alteration in the dead man to help matters out. They are waiting for the materials to make the change with, and that material appears to be contained in the package I have under my arm. Clearly, the man who paid me ten dollars to fetch it out here is the Jim they referred to, and he is in with them."

Joe wondered what he ought to do, in the light of the revelations that had so unexpectedly come to him.

Ought he to go back to town and turn the package over to the police, with his statement of the case as far as he had become acquainted with it?

That would probably insure the arrest of the three insurance conspirators—the two here and Jim at the St. Denis Hotel in New York.

He would be able to identify all three, for he had got a good look at their faces.

Then it struck him that possibly the man Jim did not live at the St. Denis Hotel, but had merely given that house as his address.

Joe recalled that he did not seem particularly anxious to get a receipt back for the package, and had told him to mail it to the hotel instead of calling there with it.

"I'll bet he doesn't put up there," was the boy's conclusion. "If I am right the police will have some trouble in getting him. Still they ought to catch these two. In any case the exposure of the scheme will spoil it."

Joe knew it would take at least an hour to return to the heart of Jersey City, where Police Headquarters was; another half hour would elapse before the police were ready to start out here, and an hour more in coming to the house.

It was after five now, he judged, which would bring the time close to eight o'clock.

The men would probably grow impatient over the delay, and it was not improbable that one of them would start in to hunt up Jim to find out why the package had not come to time.

Then Joe considered whether the two men in the house, if arrested, would be held on his testimony, the only corroboration of which was the contents of the package, which might really of itself prove nothing.

Wouldn't it be better for him to deliver the package, then hang around the outside of the house, which he might easily do, undetected, in the thick mist, and watch through the window what the men did to the corpse?

He would thus give them the opportunity to manufacture evidence against themselves.

After figuring the matter out he decided that would be the better way.

As he started for the back door to announce his presence he thought of the cancelled check numbered 765.

It was in the pock-marked man's possession.

He intended to destroy it.

Joe felt that it would probably be the means of establishing the identity of the corpse, and therefore it was important it should be recovered by the police.

It might be the means of saving the dead man from being planted in the Potter's Field, an end that the boy regarded as very sad.

Reaching the rear door, Joe pounded on it.

In a few moments he heard steps inside, and a voice asked through the keyhole who was there.

"I've got a package for the occupant of this house," replied the lad.

He heard a chain taken down, a bolt shot back, a key turned and then the door opened, revealing an indistinct figure in the darkness which, however, from his voice, Joe knew was the pock-marked man, whose name was Fletcher.

A match was flashed in the boy's face.

"Where's the package?" asked Fletcher, gruffly.

"Here," said Joe.

"Give it to me."

"I want a receipt for it. It's important."

"You're an A. D. T. boy, I suppose? Where's your slip? I'll sign that."

"No, I'm not a district messenger, and haven't a slip. I was specially hired by a man who said his name was Downey, and gave his address as the St. Denis Hotel, New York, to bring this package out here. He told me to send the receipt to the hotel," said Joe, trying to make out what effect this information would have on Fletcher.

As the match had gone out he could not see the grin that came upon the pock-marked man's face.

"Said his name was Downey, eh?" he said, with a chuckle, which the boy's sharp ears caught. "All right. He wanted a receipt, I suppose, to make sure that you delivered the package to me."

"I suppose so. He doesn't know me."

The man hesitated a moment or two.

"Got a piece of paper about you?" he asked. "I'll write my name on it. That will be enough, for he knows my signature."

"No, I haven't any paper," replied Joe.

The man fumbled in his pockets, finally pulled something out, put it against the wall in the dark and wrote his name on it.

"Here, that'll do," he said, hastily shoving the paper at the boy.

Joe took it and handed over the package.

"You were paid for bringing it, wasn't you?" said Fletcher.

"Yes, that's all right," replied Joe.

"Well, here's half a dollar for you in addition. It's a nasty night and it's worth something extra tramping away out here. You'd better hurry back to the trolley before the fog gets thicker or you might lose your way. Good-night."

The door was shut, locked, bolted and chained in Joe's face.

CHAPTER IV.

JOE ENTERS THE HOUSE UNEXPECTEDLY.

Joe shoved the paper carelessly in his pocket.

He had fulfilled his errand and earned the \$10, now he was at liberty to carry out his own plans, which he intended to do.

He walked around to the window which commanded the interior of the room where the corpse lay, took up his position and awaited developments.

The moments passed and nothing happened.

The mist had now thickened to a real fog and he could see nothing around him, for darkness had fallen upon the landscape.

He grew impatient as time passed.

"I wonder how long before they'll get busy?" he thought. "Standing out here is no cinch. The fog wets one almost as much as a drizzling rain. It may start in raining again any moment, and then my position won't be very nice, though I suppose I could protect myself with my umbrella."

He decided to walk around the house to see if the men were on the other side.

He kept close to the house to feel his way.

He did not see the old-fashioned inclined cellar flap which stood in his way and he stumbled over the edge of it and fell upon it with all his weight.

The flaps had been in position ever since the house was built, a great many years since, and the wood, though it looked fairly solid enough on the outside, was little better than punk.

They could not stand the impact of Joe's 150 pounds, and

they collapsed with a dull crash, and he was precipitated into the cellar.

He hit the wood flooring with his head and arms, while his legs struck the wooden steps.

He might easily have broken an arm, or even his neck, for the drop was all of six or seven feet and he landed awkwardly.

Fortunately his luck was in the ascendant at the moment and he escaped scot free of any injury except a pair of barked shins, but for some minutes he lay dazed and motionless in a heap, just as he had tumbled.

The noise did not attract the attention of the two men, who had entered the room where the corpse lay and prepared to get busy.

The first thing they did was to pin a double sheet of newspaper over the lower sash of each of the two windows.

They did not expect that any one would be around the house to take note of what was going on inside the room, for it wasn't a night to attract even a straggler to that neighborhood, but they wished to be on the safe side.

Had Joe remained at the window this precaution on their part would have prevented him from satisfying his curiosity, and he would have had to return to Jersey City disappointed.

Joe finally picked himself up and felt of his arms and legs, wondering if he really was all there.

"My!" he ejaculated, "that was a tumble and a half. It fairly knocked me silly. That is what a person gets for monkeying around an unfamiliar building in the fog and darkness. I wonder if the men heard the noise of my fall? I should think they would. I had better get ready to sneak the moment I hear them coming to find out the cause of the disturbance."

He listened, but heard no sounds indicating the coming of the men.

Then he limped up to the top of the cellar entrance and stood there looking toward the back door.

He heard nothing there, either.

"Maybe they didn't hear the sound," he thought.

He waited a while, and as nothing happened he came to the conclusion that the occupants were ignorant of the accident.

"Here's a chance for me to get into the house, unobserved," he said to himself. "It's taking considerable of a risk, for if I should be caught they'd surely handle me without gloves. Still, in the interest of justice, I think I ought to venture. I might be able to secure evidence against them not otherwise obtainable."

Joe was a plucky boy and not easily intimidated.

He decided to go in and see what he could discover.

The steps were covered with bits of the broken flaps, so he felt his way down to the floor with care.

Striking a match, of which he always carried a supply, he looked around the cellar.

It was lumbered up with all sorts of useless truck—broken boxes, boards, bits of wood and any amount of dirt and dust.

Festoons of cobwebs hung from the beams, and they were black and heavy with dirt.

The place had evidently not been in use for a long time.

He looked around for a door and found one half-way down the cellar which admitted him to a partitioned off section where a stairway led to the first floor.

There was a door at the head of the stairs.

As Joe ascended the stairs he wondered if it was secured on the other side.

If it was he could not hope to explore any further part of the house.

On trying the handle, he found the door was not locked or bolted, and he stepped into the kitchen.

A lamp, turned low, was burning on the top of the stove, which was rusty and showed little signs of use.

There was no furniture at all in the room, nor was there a dish or a single cooking utensil in sight.

The stove, which appeared to be a part of the house, was the only article, save a couple of empty boxes, in the place.

"The house is clearly an unoccupied and unfurnished one which these men have temporarily taken possession of, doubtless without the knowledge of the owner," said Joe.

He perceived a paper bag on the stove, which he looked into and saw that it contained a sandwich.

The door of the kitchen stood ajar and, opening it a little more, the boy looked out into a narrow entry.

Striking a match, he saw two doors.

He listened at both, but heard no sound, nor did the least glimmer of light filter through the keyholes.

He opened the nearest one and gazed into a black void.

Another match disclosed it to be a bare room which probably had been used as a dining-room.

The other door opened on the hall leading to the front door.

Stepping into it he saw light shining under the door nearest him, and he heard the voice of Fletcher speaking.

He also heard a light, pounding sound.

"They are working on the corpse. I wonder what they are doing to it?" he thought.

His rubber shoes made no noise on the boards as he gilded to the door and put his eye to the keyhole.

His range of vision was not extensive, but it took in the head of the corpse.

The well-dressed man was operating on one of its teeth.

On the dead man's breast lay a hand-drill.

The man had made a big hole in the tooth and was pounding gold filling into it with the confidence of an expert dentist.

He was not a dentist, however.

"There, that one is done," said the well-dressed man. "It may not be an artistic job, but it will answer for identifying the molar when what is left of the cremated corpse is brought to light. Let me see, the other tooth that the insured has filled is this one, isn't it?"

"That's the one. It has a gold cap on it," said Fletcher.

"Yes, I know. Here is the golden plug that will give a good imitation of the cap after I have filed away the tooth and drilled it," said the other.

The speaker picked up a small file and began work.

"I must say this isn't a pleasant job," he said, "but as there is the promise of big money in it I have undertaken it."

"When you finish with that tooth you're done," said Fletcher.

"Yes, and I won't be a bit sorry, I can tell you. It takes some nerve to do this business, believe me."

"Oh, well, a fellow runs up against unpleasant things sometimes."

"Did you ever hear of a man doing such a job as this before?"

"No, I can't say that I have. That very fact ought to be enough to blind the insurance people."

"As soon as we set fire to this old shack-rookery and dust out, our part of the scheme will be finished. The neater part of identifying the corpse and claiming the insurance money will then be up to Jim. I opine he is the boy to work it out all right, for he's pretty slick. When we get the cash we'll open a gaudy office somewhere in Wall Street and start a get-rich-quick scheme. The world is full of suckers, and there is no reason why we shouldn't have a shy at them as well as others who have feathered their nests at the expense of the gullible public," said the well-dressed man.

"That's right," nodded Fletcher. "The only trouble is that the secret service people of the post-office may take notice and descend upon us."

"They never act except a complaint is made to the department. Before anybody has grounds for a complaint we ought to gather in enough wealth to enable us to fold our wings and pass away to Canada or Europe."

Here the speaker took up the hand-drill and began making a hole in the roots of the tooth.

"It's a good thing for this chap he is dead and can't feel this business," he said. "I know what it is to have a tooth filled by the most scientific method, and it's nothing to go into ecstasies over."

"I believe not," said Fletcher. "You'll be soon done now and then all that remains will be for us to prepare the funeral pyre and touch it off. It's a beautiful night for a small conflagration. This house is as dry as tinder and will make a good blaze. By the time the fire department gets here there'll be nothing to save."

"So much the better. We want to make a sure job of this so that suspicion will not attach to it. The easier we make it for Jim the best all around."

He put down the drill, inserted the gold plug and began driving it home with a piece of steel and small mallet.

"There, that will do, I think. How do the two teeth lock?"

"First-rate. That's Dixon's mouth. I could swear to it," said Fletcher.

"If you can swear to it then it's all right. Now I'll wash my hands and then we'll fetch in the excelsior and other combustibles, with plenty of light wood to give the fire a good start. We must insure the destruction of the fleshy part of the corpse's face so as to destroy all the original looks of the corpse. Gather up the tools and restore them to the box they came in. That messenger boy little thought

what he was bringing here. Probably he thought the package held important papers. He'll read the account of this old house burning down in the morning papers, I daresay, and the story will probably interest him. As the burned corpse is not likely to be found until the ruins are gone over it will probably be a day or two before the presumed tragedy comes to light. The boy, particularly if he's a New Yorker, as it strikes me he is, may not read about it, which will be all the better."

The well-dressed man started for the door, and Joe thought it time to beat a retreat.

What with his haste and the darkness he started in the wrong direction, and instead of reaching the door into the entry he came up against the front door, which was locked and the key gone.

At that moment the well-dressed man came out of the room with the candle in his hand, followed by Fletcher with the tools.

Joe could not help making some noise, for in his consternation at finding himself at the wrong end of the hall he was not as careful as he might have been.

The sounds attracted the attention of the men in his direction, and when they saw an indistinct figure at the hall door they experienced something of a shock.

"Look!" cried the well-dressed man, holding the light above his head, "there's somebody in the house."

Fletcher uttered an imprecation, dropped the tools and made a rush at Joe.

The boy saw him coming and dashed upstairs.

Unfortunately for him his arctics caught on the first step and he went down, sprawling.

Before he could rise the man leaped on him and he was a prisoner.

"Fetch the light, Decker!" shouted Fletcher.

The well-dressed man came forward.

Fletcher yanked Joe backward on his knees and pulled his head around.

"It's a boy," said Decker.

As he spoke Fletcher recognized Joe as the party who had delivered the package to him at the back door.

He uttered an ejaculation of surprise.

How had this boy, whom he supposed to be well on his way back the way he came, got into the house, and why was he there?

"So it's you, is it? What in thunder brings you in here, and how did you get in?" he said.

Joe realized that he was up against it, but he put on a bold front.

"I fell in here," he replied.

"Fell in here! What do you mean by that?"

Joe, wishing to make it appear that his presence in the house was an accidental one, explained that while walking toward the corner of the house he tripped over the cellar flaps, which he did not notice in the mist; that the boards had given away and he fell into the cellar.

"That's the way you got in, was it?"

"Yes."

"Why didn't you walk out again? Why did you come up through the house?"

"I suppose I was confused by the tumble," said Joe, evasively.

"That won't do, young man," said Fletcher. "You came up here to find out something."

"What should I want to find out?"

"It's an hour since you left that package. You've been hanging around the place for some reason. Own up what your object was."

"I've told you all there is to tell."

"No, you haven't. You've been playing the spy on us."

"You're crazy," said Joe.

"I want to know what you've seen."

"What could a fellow see in the dark?"

"I believe you were spying on us through the keyhole while we were in that room. Own up."

"I'll own up nothing," replied Joe.

With an imprecation, Fletcher pulled Joe with him down the hall, opened the door of a closet space under the stairs, gave him a shove, then closed the door and locked it.

Thus the Wall Street boy found himself a prisoner in the dark.

CHAPTER V.

HOW JOE ESCAPED HIS FATE.

Joe heard the men's retreating footsteps and then silence ensued.

"I'm in a nice pickle," he muttered. "I wonder what they will do with me? Their purpose is to set fire to the house to burn up the greater part of that corpse and make it appear he lost his life in the flames. I'm afraid that pock-marked chap suspects that I know too much about their scheme. Suppose they should leave me in the house to burn up with it, that would be pretty fierce."

The fear the boy entertained at that moment was the subject of argument at the same time between the men in the kitchen.

"It will never do for us to let that boy get away," said Fletcher. "He has learned enough about our plans to blow the gaff, and we must either do him up or be done up ourselves. After all the trouble we've been put to so far to work the scheme, it won't do to allow that lad to put the kibosh on it. He must go up with the house."

"But that will be murder," objected Decker.

"Suppose it is? Self-protection is the first law of nature. As the case stands, it's he or us. No half-way measures will go."

"But I didn't bargain for anything of that kind," said Decker.

"Very well. You needn't have any hand in it. Do your share towards getting things ready for the torch and then light out. I'll stay behind and apply the match."

"But I'll be implicated in the matter."

"Not at all. You've got nothing to say about it, one way or the other. You came here chiefly to operate on the stiff's mouth. You've done that, and outside of giving me a lift with the preparations for the fire you are out of it. I'll give you time enough to reach the trolley before I see her off. That's my plan and I'm goin' to carry it out, so there isn't any use of you putting up any objection."

Decker saw that his companion was in earnest, so he gave up and for the next half hour they busied themselves with the inflammable material they had at hand.

When everything was ready Fletcher told Decker to make a start.

He did so, and the pock-marked man sat down to smoke his pipe in the kitchen.

By the time he had finished, Decker was on a car speeding toward the ferry, by which he intended to cross over to New York and meet the third rascal somewhere up in a Tenderloin resort.

Fletcher left the kitchen and entered the hall of the house. Going to the door of the closet under the stairs he pounded on the door.

"Are you goin' to own up, young fellow?" he asked.

"Own up to what?" replied Joe.

"That you have discovered what is going on here?"

"What are you talking about?"

"Tryin' to fool me, aren't you? Well, I'm too old a chicken to be caught by a shrimp like you. I know you're on to our game, and as either you or the game must go out of business, it'll have to be you. This building will be in flames in a few minutes, and you will have to take your chances where you are."

"Are you going to leave me here, like a rat in a trap, to be burned alive?" asked Joe.

"That's exactly what I'm going to do," said Fletcher, in a tone that showed he meant it.

"If I die you'll be responsible for my death," said Joe, through the keyhole.

"I'm not worryin' about that. Your life is nothing to me."

"You will have to answer for the crime," said Joe, desperately.

"There won't be enough left of you an hour from now to cause me any worry. Good-night, and pleasant dreams to you."

Thus speaking, the scoundrel walked away and entered the room where the corpse was laid out on a thick bed of shavings and excelsior soaked in gasoline.

Lying across his body in every direction were light pieces of wood.

In fact, so well surrounded was the dead man with food for the flames that little of his body could be seen.

Fletcher tore down the paper from the windows and looked out.

The fog was thicker than ever.

He threw up a sash to find out if there was any wind at all, but found there was not.

This was the only feature of the night that he did not like.

He wished for a breeze to make the fire burn the quicker after it got well under headway.

But he was powerless to change the conditions of nature. He had to let matters go as they were.

Leaving the window as it was, he started in to apply a light to the inflammable pile in several places.

The flames sprang up quickly, and in a few moments the corpse was the center of a sea of fire.

Fletcher, satisfied that his work was well under way, hurried from the room, leaving the door into the hall wide open.

As this door faced the closet in which the boy was imprisoned, perhaps he took an unholy satisfaction in letting his victim experience a foretaste of what was coming to him.

The fire naturally was reflected into the hall and shone under the door of the closet, while the crackling of the burning wood was plainly apparent to Joe's ears.

Fletcher could not resist the inclination to put it over the boy once more.

He stopped and gave the closet door a thump.

"Do you see the light, young fellow?" he said. "The room across the hall is on fire. It is burning at a rate that will soon bring it out here and then you will get a nice warming this foggy night. Now you see what you are getting for putting in on what did not concern you. Instead of one body, two will be found in the ruins to-morrow or next day, but I doubt if there will be enough left of you to show who you are. That's all I've got to say to you."

Fletcher hurried away, satisfied that the secret of the insurance swindle was safe, and was presently speeding across lots, but not in the direction of the trolley tracks.

To board a car in that lonesome spot, with the flames of a burning house behind him lighting up the foggy air, might cause some suspicion to attach to himself, and that, under the circumstances, was not desirable.

Left alone in the burning house, Joe for the first time lost his nerve.

The pluckiest man or boy in the world will recoil at a fate that faced him.

He threw himself against the door with feverish energy, and all the force he was capable of.

It shivered and creaked, but it held firm in spite of all his efforts.

Then he kicked frantically at it, but without the least result.

And during all this the fire grew bright, and the crackle of the flames waxed into a roar.

The room was wrapped in fire from floor to ceiling, and it leaped up against each of the four walls, and even shot through the open door, as if it knew a victim was penned up in the closet and it longed to get at him.

"Must I perish thus?" fluttered the Wall Street boy. "No, no, I can't bear the idea of such an awful death. I must escape! I must—I must!"

In his desperation he pounded futilely on the door, like a crazy boy.

All seemed vain, and he resigned himself to despair, fully assured he never would see the light of day again, or the faces of his widowed mother and sister, who, unconscious of his peril, were wondering what detained him downtown that foggy evening.

Some precious moments elapsed, during which the fire made rapid progress, while Joe leaned helplessly against the door in a state of apathy.

Suddenly he roused himself, and feeling for a match struck it.

Looking around the closet he saw it contained divers pieces of broken furniture which had been thrown there when the last occupant moved out, over a year since.

The boy grabbed a heavy piece and attacked the door around the lock with it.

He struck with all his strength, but was unable to do much damage to the lock, because it was within a thick part of the door.

Then he did what he should have done first—he struck at the panels, and as they were much weaker than the frame of the door he presently splintered one of them.

Then he got a full view of the blazing room, and realized that he had but very little time to accomplish his escape if it could be done at all.

A terrific blow smashed the second panel.

The centerpiece of the door, however, remained as an obstacle to be overcome.

He attacked it with the heavy piece of mahogany, hitting it sideways.

Bit by bit he knocked it away until he had greatly weakened its strength.

Then he used his bit of wood as a lever and, exerting all his muscular power, he pulled against it.

With a crash it gave way and he tumbled backward on the floor.

In a moment he was on his feet and, grabbing the center-piece worked it loose from the top.

That left all the space he required to get out.

As he started to spring out, with the heat of the flames in his face, he found out that he had put himself to a lot of useless trouble.

The key was in the door, and he might easily have turned it and walked out after smashing the first panel.

He turned it now and threw the broken door open.

Rushing out, he made for the entry door, passed through into the kitchen and found the door there unlocked, just as Fletcher left it.

As he passed out into the dense fog he saw the glow on the burning side of the house lighting up the mist in that direction, like a kind of halo.

He started post-haste for the trolley tracks, and was half-way there, the fog all lit up behind him, when he recollected that he had left his umbrella behind in the kitchen of the building, where he stood it when he began his investigation of the rooms after coming up out of the cellar.

What was an umbrella to him at that moment?

It was of mighty little importance.

He had saved his life when he was almost at the last pinch, and his joy was so great over that fact that it dwarfed every other consideration.

Besides, it wasn't raining, anyhow.

On he hurried across the soggy ground, and finally reached the tracks.

There was not a car in sight in either direction.

"I might as well walk ahead till a car overtakes me," he thought. "That's some fire now, the whole house has caught. If I hadn't got out of the closet when I did I would be dead and gone by this time," he said, with a shudder.

The fog was so thick that the flames could not be seen through it—only the deep reddish glow that made a great bright spot on the landscape, and which told one that a building of some size was burning out near the river.

Joe judged that it was around nine o'clock, and he wondered if the nearest fire-engines had gone to the scene of the conflagration.

Joe did not walk on the car-track, for there was danger of the car coming up on him unawares in the fog and running him down, so he kept along the side of it.

As the cars were all running slowly, it was some little time before one bound for the ferry overtook him, when he boarded it.

"A nice night to be out in," he remarked to the conductor.

"Yes, and a nice night for a fire, too," replied the man.

"There's a big house burning along the river."

"I saw it," said Joe. "An out-of-the-way spot for the engines to go."

"Rather," nodded the conductor. "What brings you out in this direction this evening? Visiting friends?"

"No. I came out on business."

Joe walked inside and took a seat.

There were only a few people in the car, and they were all bundled up.

In the course of an hour the car reached the ferry and Joe went aboard the waiting boat.

It was a slow trip across the river, for the fog was as thick there as pea soup, and the pilot, who could not see his way, had to feel it with caution.

Joe was mighty glad to step ashore in New York once more.

All the way back he had been figuring on what he should do about exposing the insurance swindlers.

He concluded that the best thing he could do would be to tell Mr. Drew in the morning and act on his advice.

The game was clear enough to him.

An accomplice of the three rascals had insured his life for a heavy sum in an insurance company, or he might have taken out several policies.

He had given his residence as the old house out on the Hackensack River, and made the policy or policies payable to an alleged brother or other relative.

Then he decamped, leaving the game to be played out by his pals.

A dead body nearest resembling the insured had been obtained, and his two front teeth had been filled with gold to agree with those in the mouth of the insured, and prob-

ably he had been provided with other natural marks of identification.

The idea was then to set the house on fire and burn up the corpse so that little would be left of it save the bones.

They counted on the skull, at any rate, being recovered from the ruins, when the two filled teeth would serve to identify the burned body as the insured.

That fact having been established, the conspirators would then collect the insurance and divide it equally all around.

Probably they would then go to some other part of the country and play the game over again, with some variation, and thus make a good haul at the expense of the insurance companies.

"The world is full of such schemers, but I think I will be able to block their game in this case and land them in prison. The pock-marked chap deserves a lifer for his diabolical attempt to roast me alive," thought Joe. "The only trouble is I never will be able to prove the crime against him."

It was eleven o'clock when he got home, and he found his mother and sisters greatly worried over his unexplained absence.

He told them he was sent to Jersey City on business by Mr. Drew, and volunteered no further explanation, so they felt satisfied it was all right.

He ate his supper, which had been kept warm against his return, and shortly afterward went to bed.

CHAPTER VI.

CHECK 765.

He started for Wall Street at the usual time next morning.

He looked his paper all over to see if the fire was printed in it, but it was not.

"I daresay there is a paragraph in the Jersey City papers about it. I should like to see what was printed," he said to himself.

There was small chance of his getting a Jersey City paper until after business hours, so he thought no more about it.

The fog still hung around the lower part of the city, though it had thinned out somewhat, and the air was damp and things generally unpleasant.

Joe had quite forgotten all about the cancelled check No. 765, which Fletcher found on the corpse, and which had at first interested him as offering a means of identifying the dead man.

When he entered the office, the first to get there, he picked up that morning's Daily Wall Street Argus and sat down to look over the previous day's market report and other news of interest to him. He suddenly recalled the check.

"The pock-marked man doubtless dropped it in the fire, as he said he intended to get rid of it, and that's the end of it. The corpse will never be identified now, except as the insured, and I will see that that identification is exposed. If I knew what Goldfield bank the check was on I might write out there. And yet what good would that do without I was able to furnish the name of the person who drew the check? No good at all. I'm afraid the man from the West will have to rest in a nameless grave—what is left of him. Poor fellow, it is too bad. If he left no relatives to mourn his death it will probably make little difference otherwise—but there is no use talking about it. It will be all the same a hundred years hence what becomes of the bones of any of us who are alive to-day."

Joe opened the Argus and turned to the market report.

While he went over it the clerks came in and entered the counting-house, then came the stenographer, a pretty girl named Miss Foley, who smiled at Joe, as was her morning custom, and lastly the cashier.

The latter gentleman opened up the big safe, and work began for the day in the office.

Mr. Drew usually reached the office about ten, but since he went to his villa on the Hudson, he had been arriving around half-past ten.

He came to the city on a New York Central train which reached the Grand Central depot about ten o'clock.

At quarter of ten this morning the cashier received a telephone message from him to the effect that he probably would not be at the office that day.

Joe knew nothing about this, and when he came in from an errand at half-past ten he asked the cashier if the boss had arrived yet.

"No. He is not likely to be here to-day."

"Is that so? I'm sorry, for I wanted to see him about an important matter."

"It will have to go over till to-morrow, I'm afraid. By the

way, there was a man in here asking for you while you were out."

"A man! What sort of person was he?"

The cashier gave him a rough description, but it was enough for Joe to identify the visitor as the man who hired him to take the package to the house on the Hackensack River.

"What did he say?"

"He asked if you were employed here, and when I said you was he looked around the place and then asked me where you were. When I told him you were out on an errand he looked surprised."

Joe grinned, for he guessed the caller had expected to be told that he had not turned up yet.

"He gave me your name again, described you and asked me if I was sure you worked in the office. When I assured him you did, and that if he would sit down and wait he would see you shortly, he muttered something I didn't hear and left the office in a hurry. Do you know who he is?"

"I think I do," said Joe, who then walked over to his seat.

The boy had an idea why the man called.

It was to make sure that Fletcher's report that he (Joe) had perished in the flames of the old house was true.

"And now that he's learned that I'm alive and kicking, what will the bunch do?" thought the Wall Street lad.

"Fletcher is sure I'm on to their secret, but he has no actual proof of that fact—merely a strong suspicion because he, and the man he called Decker, caught me in the hall close to the room where they had been conducting their operations. The man named Jim, who hired me to take the package, seems to be the leader in the scheme. The other two have done their part in the conspiracy, and now the final and delicate part of swearing to the identity of the corpse in the ruins as the insured, and making the demand for the insurance money, is up to him. Will he act in the face of Fletcher's suspicions now that he knows I'm alive, or will he wait to see what move I make? Much will depend on that. It seems to me that it would defeat the ends of justice if I moved first. At the present moment there isn't the least bit of evidence against them—only my uncorroborated story of what I saw and heard. Detectives might make a case of it, it is true. They could find out that a man answering to Fletcher's description secured a corpse from the Jersey City morgue, and they might be able to trace it to the old house that is now a ruin, but what else could they learn? And how could it be proved that the corpse was intended to be used to swindle the insurance company holding a risk on the life of some person whose identity I cannot show? I'm sorry Mr. Drew won't be here to-day, for I'm more anxious than ever to consult with him. I dare not act without expert advice. At the same time I ought to try and keep track of the movements of the other side. I must learn, somehow, if the ruins have been searched for a body, and the only way I can do that will be to go to Jersey City this afternoon and make inquiries. If I make them of the fire department it is liable to connect me with the fire, and that won't do at all. The only other way is to visit the ruins, and there I am liable to meet one or more of the conspirators. Hang it, it's too bad the boss didn't come to the office!"

At that point in his reflections the cashier called to Joe to go out with a message to the Exchange—to the young man who represented Mr. Drew in the board room.

When he got to the Exchange he noticed on the blackboard that A. & C. had gone up half a point.

He met Dick Singleton going in when he came out.

"Well, how about that tip?" asked Dick. "Going to act on it?"

"I've already done so."

"Good! You didn't lose any time. You're bound to make a fine thing out of it, and I see a nice little wad coming my way."

"Never count your chickens before they're hatched. Something might happen to spoil the deal."

"What could happen? It's a sure cinch that A. & C. will boom from fifteen to twenty points."

"There's nothing sure in Wall Street. You've been working in the Street long enough to know that."

"Well, it's as sure as anything can be."

"I take it for granted that it is, and I expect to win out, but I don't intend to count my winnings beforehand. I leave that till I have cashed in."

"I guess you're pretty level-headed."

"I've been fooled on a sure thing more than once. If I'd make a success of all my deals I'd be worth a whole lot more than the few hundreds I have now, most of which I slapped up on A. & C. It may go to par, but I'm not going

to risk it to that point. A fifteen-point advance is a mighty good thing to cash on. A three to five point advance is usually the best one can count on these days, and he's lucky who can gather that in once in a while."

"That's right," nodded Dick. "I see the sun is trying to come out. I guess we shall have a decent day after all."

"I hope so. Good-by!" and Joe started off.

He was kept pretty busy right up to the moment he started for the bank to deposit the checks and cash which had been received that day, and consequently he had had no time to think further about the life insurance swindlers.

At the bank he took his place at the end of the line gravitating toward the receiving-teller's window.

While making his way toward the window he began to consider his movements after he got off work.

He decided to cross the river and go out to the scene of the fire.

He thought it would be a good idea to take Dick with him, if his friend would go, as he did not think it would be safe for him to run against the conspirators if they should happen to be there and no one else.

Still he thought it was unlikely that Fletcher would go there, unless the fascination that is said to lure a criminal to the scene of his crime attracted him to the spot.

Nor was it likely that Decker would find any interest in revisiting the place.

The man Jim, however, might be there prepared to identify the remains if they were found by searchers.

But if he asked Dick to go he would have to give some reason for visiting such an out-of-the-way spot, and the fact that he merely wanted to view the ruins of an old frame structure that had burned down during the night was hardly a good one.

On the whole, he guessed he would have to make the trip alone.

When he returned to the office he sat down in his seat to await further orders.

Then it was he recalled the paper bearing Fletcher's signature which that individual had given him when he handed over the package.

"That ought to be a piece of evidence against him," he thought. "What did I do with it?"

He felt in the side-pockets of his overcoat and drew out the paper.

When he looked at it he gave a gasp of surprise.

It was a cancelled check—the very check, in fact, that Fletcher had found in the trousers of the corpse, for it bore the number 765.

CHAPTER VII.

JOE TAKES UP THE CASE WITH HIS BOSS.

"Holy mackerel!" ejaculated Joe. "How came that rascal to hand this to me? He was going to destroy it, for Decker had advised him that it might, if found, prove an awkward clew to the corpse. It's on the Goldfield National Bank and is signed by—hang me if I can make out the signature. It's a corker!"

Joe turned it over and saw that it was indorsed by the man who drew it, for it was made payable to "Self."

Across the paper Fletcher had scrawled his name, "T. Fletcher."

"It is clear that in the darkness the rascal did not know what he was handing me, but thought it was a piece of blank paper," thought Joe. "My, how people will sometimes give themselves away without meaning to do so! I have read that some of the sharpest criminals make slips, simple ones, that lead to their detection. This may prove a useful piece of evidence. I must look out for it. It's too valuable for me to carry around. I'll put it in an envelope and ask the cashier to place it in the safe."

He got an envelope, wrote his name on the outside, and sealed the check up in it.

Then he handed it to the cashier.

Half an hour later he was off for the day.

He started at once for Jersey City.

It was a different afternoon from the previous one, being clear and sunshiny.

He boarded a car and went out to the river.

He could see nothing of the house, for it had burned completely to the ground.

He saw a bunch of people some distance away, and he judged that was where the ruins were.

He walked over there and soon made out a few blackened sticks standing here and there.

Perhaps a dozen boys were walking around looking at the debris, and several boys were digging in the ashes.

He kept a sharp lookout for the man Jim, whom he was sure he would easily recognize, but he saw no one that looked like him.

He casually inquired if anybody had been burnt up in the fire, but no one had heard of such a casualty.

He hung around and questioned many of those present, but learned nothing.

The ruins showed no signs of having been dug into, which proved that the chief schemer had done nothing as yet to bring what remained of the body to light.

After remaining half an hour he boarded a car and returned to New York.

It was nearly seven when he reached home.

"Late again, Joe," said his eldest sister.

"Yes. I went over to Jersey to see the ruins of a house which burned down last night."

"What house was it?"

"Oh, it was just an old-fashioned mansion out near the Hackensack River."

"What made you so curious to see what was left of it?"

"I had a reason," said Joe, in a tone that indicated he wasn't giving what that reason was.

Next morning Mr. Drew appeared at the office.

He was too busy for Joe to intrude on him.

Finally along about two the broker called Joe in to send him on a special errand, then the boy told him he had something particular to see him about.

"What is it?" asked Mr. Drew.

"It's considerable of a story, too long to tell you now. I'd like to tell you before you go away."

"You can tell me after you come back from the bank."

At a quarter-past three Joe went into the private room.

"Can you hear my story now, sir?" he said.

"Yes," said the broker, "I'll listen to you."

So Joe told about meeting the stranger on the Jersey City ferryboat, and then all that meeting led up to.

That the broker was astonished goes without saying.

"Now I want your advice as to what course I shall pursue. The point I am aiming at is to get evidence enough against the men so that when they are arrested the insurance company will have some ground for proceeding against them. As the matter stands my story is the only thing against them, and without some corroboration it would hardly suffice to hold the men on."

"Do you know the insurance company the men are trying to beat?"

"I do not."

"That is an important matter."

"I don't know the name of the man whose insurance money they are aiming at, either. That's another important fact."

The broker considered.

"You will have to wait for the rascals to act first," he said. "The difficulty is that you won't be able to tell when they do act unless they are watched. The only way to have them looked after is to put the police in possession of the facts. They won't make any arrest until they secure corroboration of your story."

"I went out to the scene of the fire yesterday afternoon to see if any attempt had been made to bring the burned corpse to light, but none had. It is my opinion that the insurance conspirators, fearing trouble from me, for they know I escaped the death marked out for me by the chap named Fletcher, will go slow. I think they will keep me under watch for a while to see if I do anything."

"I should think it would strike them that if you knew anything about their plans you would have gone to the Jersey City police as soon as you escaped and reported the whole matter. The fact that you did not do so ought to disarm their suspicion."

"I did not do it for the reason I have explained, that I felt I could make no case against them that would hold water in court. Even Fletcher would escape punishment for trying to burn me up, for he would deny that he made such an attempt and I could not prove that he did."

"I see, but I think you made a mistake by not going to the police and making your charge against Fletcher. That would seem what anybody would have done under the circumstances. You need not have said a word about the insurance plot. You could have told a plain story of having been hired by a man on the ferryboat to carry a package to the old house. That you delivered the package, and on leaving the place you became confused in the fog, stumbled over the cellar door, which gave way under you and dropped you into the cellar. Some-

what dazed by the shock, instead of walking out through the broken cellar flap, you went up through the house, hardly knowing what you were doing, and was trying to make your way out of the building when you were captured by the two men, locked up in the closet and there left to your fate. A charge of attempted murder and arson would have been entered against the unknown men, and detectives would have been sent out to try and find them on the description of their personal appearance furnished by you. All this would have been printed in the papers, the rascals would have read it, and as not a word was said about the insurance business they would have revised their suspicions against you and have figured that a mistake had been made in trying to get rid of you. The man you call Jim would probably have ventured to go ahead with his part of the scheme."

"Yes, sir, I think I ought to have done that. I had some idea at first of making a clean statement of everything to the police, but I was afraid I would be detained and subjected to all sorts of inconvenience until I could satisfy them as to my identity, and that my story was straight goods," said Joe.

"It is unfortunate that you don't know the name of the insurance company in the case," said Mr. Drew. "Nor even the name of the man insured."

"There may be more than one company. As it's a game that can only be worked once in this neighborhood, and there are four men looking for a share of the money, I think it likely that the insured has taken out policies in several companies."

"That is not unlikely. I think I will send for one of the Wall Street detectives, place the case before him and see what he thinks ought to be done with the view of blocking the swindle and bringing the rascals to justice."

"Do whatever you think best, sir," said Joe.

Mr. Drew at once telephoned the Wall Street agency asking that one of their smartest men be sent to his office for consultation purposes.

It was nearly four o'clock then, and about the best time the broker could give his attention to this outside matter.

Joe walked outside to await the coming of the detective.

He had nothing more to do that day and he took up a Wall Street paper to entertain himself with.

The cashier noticed him sitting at his post and supposed that Mr. Drew was detaining him to execute some special errand.

Fifteen minutes passed and then the outer door opened and a sharp-looking man, in a smart business suit, came in. Joe went over to him.

"I have called to see Mr. Drew," said the caller.

"Are you from the Wall Street Agency?"

"Yes."

"Take a seat for a moment."

Joe went into the private room and told the broker that the detective was outside.

"Show him in and come in yourself," said Mr. Drew.

Joe ushered the sleuth inside.

"Sit down, Mr.—" said the broker.

"Dolan," said the detective.

Mr. Drew then outlined the matter in hand.

"My boy will go over the whole story for your benefit. When you are in possession of the facts I want your opinion on the case," said the broker.

Joe stepped forward and told his story exactly as the reader knows it.

The sleuth did not interrupt him.

"Now, Mr. Dolan, what do you think should be done in this case?" said Mr. Drew.

"Are you interested in this case?" asked the detective.

"In no way except to forward the ends of justice and to prevent a fraud from being consummated."

"You have sent for me merely to ask my advice?"

"That's it. Whatever steps are taken in this matter must be taken by the authorities—the Jersey City police department—since whatever crime has so far been committed has taken place within the jurisdiction of that city and the State of New Jersey."

"Would it not have been better for you to have sent for a Jersey City detective?"

"Do you advise me to do that? It is for advice only I have sent for you, and I want the best you can give me. As the matter stands there are no grounds, other than this boy's uncorroborated testimony, to proceed against those rascals. As the men know this boy has escaped the death fixed for him they are on their guard against any action he takes against them. They suspect, but do not positively know, that he has learned something about their plans. Doubtless they

will hold back to see what he does. Up to this moment he has taken no action of any kind."

"Didn't he report the attempt made to burn him alive in the building?"

"He did not. In my opinion he ought to have done so at once," said the broker.

"He certainly should have done so," said the sleuth. "He need not have brought up the rest of the matter."

"What effect do you suppose his failure to do so will have on the minds of the men?"

"It is impossible to say. They may consider that he was so glad to get out of his perilous fix that he has let the matter go."

"He thinks they are watching his movements."

"It is quite likely they are."

"Well, what ought to be done to set the law in motion against them without drawing their attention to the fact?"

"If you wish the agency to take the case in hand we will find means to bring that about. The fact that a body was taken from the morgue is a very important clue to work on. The boy's story shows where it was taken to, and the presumed reason why it was taken to the burned house. As no further steps can be taken in the scheme until the remains are exhumed from the ruins and identified, a watch will have to be kept on the place until the body is brought to light. The man who identifies the remains will then be spotted. He will be closely shadowed, and in this way his accomplices are likely to be rounded up. By following this lead quietly the police ought then to have no trouble in learning what insurance company is involved, and then a little sharp work should result in the capture of the bunch and the complete exposure of the conspiracy."

"I dare say the insurance company will be glad to recompense me for whatever expense I voluntarily go to in this matter, so I will turn the case over to you to act on as the agency thinks proper," said Mr. Drew.

"Very well. Give me a memorandum to that effect. As it is probable the Jersey City authorities will want to hear your boy's story from his own lips he must hold himself in readiness to accompany me across the river when I call for him."

"I'll go with you," said Joe, "but you mustn't overlook the fact that my going may be spotted by the rascals."

"I could send him on some errand to a Jersey City broker as a blind," said Mr. Drew. "You could then have a cab waiting for him which could drive to Police Headquarters by a back about route. That would throw them off the track."

The detective grinned.

It was the plan he had intended to suggest.

"We will do that," he said, getting up. "I will now go back to the office and report to the chief."

As he started for the door, a man who had been crouching in the corridor outside the private room door hurried off toward the elevator.

If Joe had seen him he would have said he looked something like the smartly dressed man he had seen operating on the teeth of the corpse in the old house.

CHAPTER VIII.

TRAPPED.

The following day was a busy one for Joe.

He found time, however, to keep track of A. & C. stock, and it went up to 83.

His tip was beginning to pay out.

Around half-past twelve Mr. Drew got a 'phone message from the Wall Street agency.

He was directed to send Joe to Jersey City that afternoon at half-past three o'clock.

"Notify this office when the boy starts, and the exact route he will take to the ferry. We will attend to the rest," said the voice.

Mr. Drew said he would do so.

When Joe came in the cashier said the boss wanted to see him, so he went into the private room.

"I have received a message from the detective agency requesting me to send you to Jersey City to-day. You will start after you come from the bank, around three. I will have a letter for you to take to Zolliver & Co. You will get a reply, but that amounts to nothing. The letter is merely an excuse, you understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"The cab will meet you there, though I was not so informed. The agency wishes to know the route you will take, from which I judge you will be followed and watched by Detective Dolan, who, of course, has his plans all laid. I

suppose you will walk up to Broadway, thence up that street to Cortlandt, and down Cortlandt to the ferry."

"Yes, sir."

"Keep on this side of Broadway till you come opposite Cortlandt, then cross."

"All right, sir."

"Your route on the other side has not been asked for, so I am sure you will be under the eye of the detective, who will have the cab following, probably. That is all. Report to me when you come from the bank, and if there is any change in the arrangements I will let you know them."

"Yes, sir," said Joe, who then left the room.

At three o'clock A. & C. closed at 83 3-8.

Ten minutes after three Joe got back from the bank and reported to Mr. Drew.

The broker had a letter ready for him to take to Zolliver & Co., a firm of Jersey City traders, with whom Mr. Drew occasionally did business.

"You will start at once, Joe," he said. "Just wait till I call up the agency."

At that moment his 'phone rang.

"Well?" said Mr. Drew.

"When does your boy start for Jersey City?"

"He is leaving the office now," returned the broker.

"Where is he going on the other side?"

Mr. Drew mentioned the place.

"When he leaves he will find a cab standing outside the door with an officer in it. Let him get in and he will be taken to Police Headquarters."

The speaker rang off and when Mr. Drew told Joe what the man at the agency said, the boy left the office and started for the ferry.

Mr. Drew put on his hat and went to a restaurant for a light lunch.

Ten minutes later Detective Dolan entered the office.

Not seeing Joe, he went to the cashier's window.

"Is Mr. Drew in?" he inquired.

"Just went out, sir. He will return inside of half an hour."

"Where is your young messenger?"

"Gone on an errand for Mr. Drew."

"When will he be back?"

"I couldn't say whether he'll be back or not, for it's near time for him to quit for the day."

The detective looked disappointed.

"I want to see him on important business," he said.

"You had better wait a while and see if he comes back."

"Do you know where Mr. Drew went?"

"I think he went to the Empire Cafe, on Broad street."

"I know the place. Tell the boy that Mr. Dolan called and will be back. He must wait."

"I'll tell him," said the cashier, and the sleuth started for the Empire Cafe.

He found Mr. Drew standing at the lunch-counter with a sandwich in one hand and a glass of ale in the other, talking to a friend who was also eating and drinking.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Drew, but I want to see you aside for a moment," said the detective.

The broker was surprised to see the detective, whom he recognized, for he supposed the officer was following Joe to Jersey City.

"I was over to your office," said the sleuth, "and your cashier told me I would probably find you here. I came to tell you that the chief of the Jersey City police wants to see your messenger this afternoon between four and five."

"Between four and five! Why, in accordance with an arrangement made by the agency, he started for Jersey City fifteen minutes ago."

"Your boy did!" ejaculated the detective, in surprise. "What do you mean by an arrangement with the agency? I have just come from there after getting back from Jersey City. The agency has made no arrangement with you, other than what was between us in your private room yesterday afternoon."

The broker stared at Dolan.

"I received a message over the 'phone from the agency about noon, informing me that my boy would be required in Jersey City that afternoon at half-past three o'clock. I was directed to notify the agency when he started, and the route he would take to the ferry. At a quarter-past three the agency called me up and asked when the boy would start. I replied right away. I was asked where he was going on the other side and I gave the information—Zolliver & Co., mining brokers. I was then told that a cab would be waiting for him out-

side that office into which he must step, when he would be taken to Police Headquarters."

"There is something wrong," said the detective. "You couldn't have got a message at noon from the agency telling you that the boy was wanted in Jersey City this afternoon, for the chief of police was not at Headquarters before half-past one to-day, at which time I had my interview with him in connection with the case, and was then directed to fetch him over to tell his story. I was at the agency talking with my chief at the time you say you were called up the second time, and I know we had no communication with your office at all. We never use the telephone when we can avoid it. It is evident that the conspirators in this matter have taken this means to capture the boy in order to find out, if they can force the admission from him, just what he knows. I must make an effort to head them off, though they have half an hour's start of me. What is Zolliver & Co.'s address?"

Mr. Drew, somewhat startled at the turn events had taken, gave it, and Dolan got out of the cafe in a hurry.

He jumped into a waiting cab and directed the driver to take him to the Cortlandt street ferry in record time.

In the meantime, Joe went on, unconscious that he was walking into a trap.

He caught a boat that was on the point of starting across the river, and in due time reached Zolliver & Co.'s office, where he delivered his note.

He was detained there fifteen minutes for the answer, and when he left he found a cab standing outside.

He went to the door of it and, looking in, saw a bearded man.

"Are you waiting for somebody?" he asked.

"Is your name Joe Sturgess?" asked the man.

"Yes."

"Jump in, then. I have orders to take you to the house of the chief of police. Your employer received a message to that effect by telephone."

"I thought it was Police Headquarters," said Joe, taking a seat beside the man as the cab started off.

"That arrangement was changed at the last moment," replied the man.

"All right," said Joe, "it's all the same to me."

The boy found it was quite a ride he was taking.

"How much further have we to go?" he asked.

"Not far," said the man. "Another block."

In a few minutes the cab stopped before a private house.

"Here we are," said the man, opening the door and stepping out.

Joe followed, and as he did so he took notice, in a casual way, of the number on the cab's lamp.

It was 137.

As they mounted the step to the front door the vehicle drove off.

The bearded man pulled the bell.

The door opened presently and Joe was led into a bare hallway such as one might expect to find in a vacant house.

The singularity of this fact could not but make an impression on the boy, but before he had time to give it much consideration he received a blow from behind that stretched him senseless on the boards.

When he recovered his senses an hour later he found himself bound to a post in some gloomy place that had all the appearance of a cellar.

A rag was bound around his mouth as a gag.

Then he realized that he was the victim of some sharp piece of work, and he easily guessed who were at the bottom of the outrage.

"I've been trapped," he thought, "but hang me if I can see how it could have been worked. It shows what a clever bunch those insurance rascals are. I wonder what they expect to gain by this thing? They must have been watching me all the time, followed me to the ferry, suspected my errand across the river and laid their plans to nab me. Well, I appear to be up against it. I suppose they will turn up soon and have it out with me."

His supposition proved right, for a man presently appeared. In spite of the obscurity of the place Joe recognized him right away as Fletcher.

The newcomer lit a piece of candle and held it up before the boy's face.

"You know me, I suppose?" he said, after removing the cloth from Joe's mouth.

"I do," answered the boy.

"How did you escape from the house?"

"That needn't worry you," said Joe.

"It doesn't worry me. I'm curious to know, for I didn't think you could make your escape from that closet."

"I'm not saying how I got away."

"All right. It's a matter of no importance. You did escape or you wouldn't be here now. I have a few questions to ask you."

"I'll answer them if they're the right kind of questions."

"Why did you enter the house after you delivered that package to me?"

"I told you at the house when you questioned me—because I couldn't help myself."

"You said you tripped over the cellar flaps in the fog and they gave way, dropping you into the cellar."

"That's the truth."

"Very good. When you found you were not hurt, why didn't you leave the house the way you got in and go about your business?"

"I was kind of dazed," said Joe, recalling Mr. Drew's way of putting it, "and instead of walking out I stumbled upstairs."

"Exactly. You found your way to a certain door and listened to what you heard inside."

"What's the use of questioning me if you are supplying your own answers?"

"Because I have made a good guess, haven't I?"

"I think you are making a bad guess."

"Then you deny that you tried to spy on what was transpiring in that room?"

"What reason could I have had to spy on you when I was trying to get out of the house?"

"A boy is always curious to see what he can see."

"After the tumble I had I wasn't in any condition to be curious about anything. I don't know how I escaped breaking my neck."

"Then you don't know anything about what we were doing in that room?"

"If it was anything crooked I'd have told the police long before this."

"I notice you haven't told the police that I locked you in that closet and left you to burn up."

"I'd have done it if I could have proved it against you. I don't even know who you are. Still the police might have caught you, but what good would it have done me to have pushed the charge? You would swear you didn't do it, and your word would be as good as mine in court."

Fletcher grinned.

"That's right," he said. "You couldn't prove a thing against me."

"Why was I brought to this house?"

"I wanted to have a talk with you."

"You've had it, so I hope you'll let me go."

"If I was sure you've told the truth I would."

"I've told the truth."

"There was a detective in your office yesterday afternoon talking to you and your boss."

"How came you to know that?"

"Never mind. I know it. What was he there for?"

"You'll have to ask my employer. He sent for him."

"As you were present, I'm asking you."

"I never give my employer's business away."

"Unless you answer my question you will remain in this cellar until I return, to-morrow morning."

"I can't disclose my employer's business."

"I am not interested in your employer's business. I want to know why that detective was consulting with you and your boss?"

"I can't tell you."

"Then here you stay till you do tell me."

With that, Fletcher put out the light and left the cellar.

CHAPTER IX.

HOW JOE ESCAPED.

The cellar was now quite dark, for the day was waning fast, and the small, barred windows in the top of the rear wall, on a level with the paving of the yard, admitted scarcely any light.

Fletcher, on taking his departure, did not put the gag over Joe's mouth again.

It was a matter of little importance, for the loudest shout that the boy could utter would not have reached any one's ears.

The house was a vacant one, and the two buildings on either side of it were likewise unoccupied.

Had any one come into the yard they might have heard

him if he happened to yell, but nobody came into the yard, unless it was a bunch of boys skylarking around all the yards in the block.

So Joe's chances of remaining a prisoner until released by Fletcher or another member of his crowd was pretty good.

The unexpected is what often plays a very important part in the affairs of life, and it was the unexpected that led to the Wall Street boy's release.

Two youths, of lax morals, anxious to raise the wind, got into the house by way of the broken area iron gate, and an imitation jimmy they used to force the basement door.

Joe heard their footsteps on the bare boards above, and the light tread indicated the presence of boys.

He wondered if they had been sent there to watch over him.

They made their way to the kitchen and proceeded to detach the brass cocks and sundry other bits of metal from the plumbing.

This work took them some time, for they did the business mostly in the dark to avoid discovery.

When they had cleaned the kitchen out they went upstairs to the bathroom and demoralized that room.

With a bag half full of plunder they came downstairs again and were going away when one of them suggested that they might find something more of value to them in the cellar, so down in the cellar they went.

A bit of candle lighted their way, and Joe heard their footsteps and saw the glimmer of light approaching him.

Joe saw them poking around, observed the bag over the shoulders of one, and guessed what they were up to.

Finally they came near him.

He had refrained from calling to them, because he was afraid they'd take to their heels the moment they heard his voice, which was the most likely thing they would do.

The chap with the candle suddenly made out Joe standing against the post.

With a yell of alarm he dropped the candle and ran, calling to his companion to follow.

"Wot's de matter wit' yer?" asked the other, not understanding the cause of his pal's alarm.

The other made no answer, but kept on upstairs, reached the door and running out through the area, skedaddled down the street.

"Dat Mulligan makes me tired," said the other, coming forward and picking up the bit of candle. "He's dat nervous he'd shy at his own shadder."

Then Joe, feeling it was his last chance, ventured to speak.

"Say, pard, cut me loose, will you?" he said.

The boy started as though he had been shot, dropped the bag of plunder and started to run.

"Hold on, kid, help me, won't you?" said Joe, calling after him.

The boy stopped and looked back.

No one was coming after him.

"Don't run away, kid. I'm tied up here. Come back and cut me loose," said Joe.

"Wot's dat? Youse tied up. Wot are yer tied for?" said the boy.

"A couple of fellows ran me in here and tied me to a post to keep me here."

"Wot did dey want to keep yer here for?"

"To get back at me."

"Wot for?"

"Because I know too much about them."

The boy gradually came back, holding up the light, and he soon saw that Joe was tied, hand and legs, to the post.

"Yer in a nice fix," he said, with a grin. "Wot'll yer give me if I let yer loose?"

"If those chaps didn't take my money I'll give you a dollar."

"Have yer got a dollar?"

"Release my hands and I'll see if I have."

"Yer promise to give it to me if yer have?"

"Yes."

"I don't believe yer got no dollar."

"Cut my hands free, anyway."

"I'll do dat, seein' yer in such a fix," said the youth. "Got a knife in yer pocket?"

"Yes."

"Which pocket?"

"The right one."

The boy shoved his hand into Joe's pocket and pulled out the knife.

"Dat's a fine one. Guess I'll keep it. So long!"

"Hold on! Are you going to go back on me that way?" cried Joe, apprehensively.

"I've made a knife. If I cut yer loose yer'll take it away from me."

"No, I won't. You can keep the knife if you want it. I can get another one."

"Yer say dat jest to fool me."

"Not at all. I mean it."

The boy hesitated, then he came back and backed at the line which held Joe's hands.

As soon as Joe's hands were free the boy started off with his bundle, leaving the candle burning on the floor.

Joe felt in his vest-pocket and found his small roll of bills.

"Hold on, kid! I've got a dollar. You can have it with the knife if you finish the job," he said.

"Nixy. You just want to get hold of me."

"Hand me back the knife and I'll give you the dollar. Come and look at it."

The temptation brought the tough youth back to see if Joe really had a dollar.

He saw that he held a bill in his fingers.

"All right, cully. Give me de dollar and I'll give yer back de knife," he said.

"All right. I'll trust you. There's the dollar," and he tossed it at the boy.

The lad picked it up and looked at it close to the candle.

He saw it was a dollar all right.

"Here's yer knife."

"But the rest of the cords and you can keep it, too."

"Why don't you cut dem yerself?"

"I can do it with the knife, but as you want it, and I don't care for it, for I'll be glad to get out of here, I'll give you the chance to earn it."

The youth concluded to risk it.

He cut the rest of the cords.

"Dere yer are," he said.

"Thanks. You're a brick, kid."

"I keep de knife and de dollar?"

"Yes."

"Yer all right. Glad I helped yer," said the boy, satisfied all was right.

Joe was careful not to ask his rescuer what he was doing in the house.

They left the cellar together.

"Yer scared de duff out of me friend Mulligan," grinned the kid.

"I don't wonder. Wasn't you frightened at first, too?"

"Mebbe I wuz. I thought yer wuz a ghost when I seed yer."

"I'm a pretty healthy-looking ghost, and a hungry one just now. I wonder what time it is?"

"I reckon dat it's about seven. Where do yer live?"

"In Harlem, New York."

"Hully gee! Dat's a long ways from here," said the kid, as they made their exit by the area door and gate.

"I'm not acquainted with this locality. How far is it from the ferry?"

"More dan a mile. Turn down dat street and walk till yer strike a car. Dat's de quickest way to de ferry."

"It will be after eight when I get home."

"I bet yer it will, but de elevated 'll take yer up fast on de udder side."

"Where do you live?"

"Me? Oh, I live wit' me mudder t'ree or four blocks from here, up an alley."

"What's yer name?"

"What do you want to know it for?" asked the youth, suspiciously.

"To remember you by."

"Wot yer want to remember me for?"

"Because you have done me a good turn and I appreciate it."

"Yer paid me for it."

"I haven't paid you half enough. Here's another dollar."

"Hully smoke! Yer must be made of money. I'd like to meet yer every day," said the kid, noways backward in grabbing the second dollar. "Do yer make dese t'ings?"

"Yes. I make them in Wall Street."

"Wot! Do yer work in Wall Street?"

"I do. I'm a broker's messenger."

"Is dat a fact? How in t'under did yer come to be put in dat cellar?"

"I was put there by a gang of rascals who want to keep me out of their way."

"Wot for?"

"Reason that I can't tell you."

"I s'pose yer goin' to put the police on to them?"
 "The police are on to them already."
 "Gosh! I never heard anyt'in' like dis, 'cept in de papers. Say, boss, don't put me in de papers. Don't tell de cops dat you seed me and Mulligan in dat house."
 "What are you afraid of?"
 "Not'in', but me and de cops don't hitch."
 "You haven't told me your name."
 "But dey'd get on to me t'rough Mulligan."
 "Tell me your name and I promise to keep it quiet."
 "Honest Injun?"
 "Yes."
 "Me name is Dinny Haley."
 "Thanks. I won't give you away. Well, good-by, I must get on."
 "Good-by, boss. T'anks for de two bucks and de knife. I'll 'member youse in me dreams."
 And so they parted.

CHAPTER X.

JOE BUYS A BUNCH OF MINING CERTIFICATES.

Joe reached a car bound for the ferry and boarded it, but he did not intend to go there direct.

His purpose was to stop at Police Headquarters.

Fletcher was bound to be back looking for him, and he had taken the precaution to secure the number of the house and the name of the street so as to put the police on to the place.

He thought they ought easily catch the rascal when he returned.

He inquired his way to the station-house, and finally got there.

"I want to see the chief, or his deputy, or somebody in authority here," he said.

"Your name and business, young man," asked the officer who met him.

"My name is Joe Sturgess. I live in New York and work for Nathaniel Drew, a Wall Street stock broker," replied Joe.

"I think you are very much wanted here. Detective Dolan, of the Wall Street agency, was going to fetch you here this afternoon. He turned up and said you had been enticed over here by the rascals whom you accuse of a grave crime, and carried off somewhere by them. Half a dozen men are now out looking for you."

"I was enticed over by them and trapped, but I have just made my escape from the cellar of a house where they tied me up. One of the men will be back to-night or in the morning to give me further attention. That is your chance to catch him. With one of the men locked up you ought to be able to get the others," said Joe.

He was taken into the office of the deputy chief, to whom he told his story of the events of the foggy night, and his added adventure that afternoon.

After being detained and questioned for over an hour he was permitted to go.

It was half-past nine that evening when he finally reached home.

Next morning he had quite an interesting story to relate to Mr. Drew.

Detective Dolan was sent for and heard his story, too.

Subsequently word was received from Jersey City that Fletcher had been caught.

Joe was directed to come over and identify him, which he did.

The rascal was brought before a magistrate and remanded under heavy bail.

Strenuous efforts were put forth to catch the others involved in the conspiracy, but without success.

No effort was made to search the ruins for the remains of the corpse, but the place was put under watch.

The leading insurance companies of New York were quietly advised to keep an eye on any claim made for insurance on the body of a man who was reported as having been burned to death—a man whose identity was to be largely established by means of the filling in two front teeth.

In the meantime A. & C. stock took a boom on and went clear up and beyond par.

Joe sold out at 98 and cleared a profit of \$900, ten per cent. of which he faithfully turned over to Dick Singleton.

Hardly had the boom ceased to interest Wall Street when another started up in L. & M., and Joe got in on 140 shares at 92.

During the run of this one nothing was heard from the insurance swindlers, and Joe added \$2,100 to his private pile.

As if luck was determined to smile on him in chunks he found a roll of bills in the street which counted up \$2,500.

This roll lay close to the gutter, and from the looks of the yellow boy on the outside it had been stepped upon by horse and man and smashed down by the wheels of more than one vehicle.

All this time it was in plain sight almost of unnumbered pedestrians and scurrying messenger boys, and within reach of many bootblacks and newsboys.

How long it had been kicking around the spot it was impossible to say, but evidently several hours.

It was Joe's luck to be the person to pick it up, and as the chance of finding its rightful owner was pretty slim, he added it to his pile, which now footed up to the cheerful little sum of \$6,000.

Mr. Drew paid the detective agency for Dolan's services and charged it up to profit and loss, his only recompense being the thought that he had probably stopped the insurance swindle even if three of the principals had escaped detection.

Fletcher was finally tried for being concerned in the abduction of Joe from in front of Zolliver & Co.'s office.

To this was tacked the charge of attempting to put Joe out of the way in the old house on the night of the fire.

Not a word about the insurance matter was mentioned.

The police still hoped to trick the conspirators into believing they were safe from exposure.

During all this time check 765 lay in its envelope in Broker Drew's big safe.

Joe had taken it out once and written to the Goldfield National Bank concerning it, but for some reason he got no reply.

Whether his letter miscarried, which did not strike him as likely, or the bank did not regard it as a matter of sufficient importance to take up, which was more probable, the boy couldn't say.

In any case the unfortunate man who had brought the cancelled check East, sewn up in his trouser's lining, as if it was of some importance, which could not very well be, as the money had been paid out on it, had not yet found his way to the Potter's Field, for what little remained of him still reposed in the ruins of the burned house and seemed likely to stay there for a while longer, as the owner of the property, being involved in litigation with another claimant, was unable to collect the small insurance policy, which was, instead, paid into court.

About this time Joe took the envelope containing the check out of the safe and took it home with him to show his mother and sisters, who had expressed some curiosity to see it, though as it had been taken from the body of a dead man it might have been regarded as a grewsome exhibit.

The girls looked at it with interest, but did not care to handle it, and when Joe took it to his room he put it, envelope and all, in his trunk.

Some days afterward, while looking over a Western mining paper, he noticed an advertisement of a man named James Hawley who wanted a partner to help him take over a mining property, called the Golden Argosy.

Joe remembered having seen something about a Golden Argosy mine in a scrap-book which lay on the top of Mr. Drew's safe, in which it was his duty to paste such clipping of a mining nature from time to time as the broker handed him for that purpose.

It was indexed so that anything in the book could readily be found at a moment's notice.

Joe got the book, consulted the index and turned to the page in which the Golden Argosy mine was pasted.

The clipping began by stating that the Golden Argosy, of which great things had been expected, had petered out completely and was now relegated to the category of dead mines, the only real mourners being the people who had purchased half a million shares of the stock at prices from 5 cents to 25 cents.

Then followed the history of the mine.

A golden ledge of seemingly fabulous value had been discovered by a prospector named William Smith.

He had had no difficulty in enlisting capital to develop the property, and the Golden Argosy Mining Co. was incorporated under the laws of Nevada.

Everything went on swimmingly for a little while, when the golden ledge suddenly disappeared.

Further operations to find it developed ore of a much lower grade.

Things looking unsatisfactory, the company began putting its stock on the market to raise money.

Altogether, 500,000 shares were issued, over 100,000 of which were sold in the East, and then the public ceased to bite.

It was about time they did, for the mine had been going from bad to worse, and its prospects amounted to nothing.

Six months later the clipping appeared announcing that the promoters had given up the work and wanted to sell at any old price.

The clipping was eighteen months old, and Joe had no means of learning what had taken place since with respect to it.

The advertisement in the Western paper showed that James Hawley had become interested in the property and wanted some financial aid to acquire possession of it, presumably for the purpose of trying his luck in the dead mine.

That day, while hunting for something in the boss' closet, Joe came upon a dust-covered package marked Golden Argosy stock.

He asked Mr. Drew about it.

"A customer left those certificates with me for sale a year or more ago, but I couldn't find a buyer, for the mine was a dead proposition. I asked the owner to take them away, but he never did and they've been there since."

Joe asked him about the advertisement, and remarked that the most might amount to something yet.

"Not the chance in a thousand," replied the broker. "Dead mines seldom come to life again."

"How many shares in that package?"

"Ten thousand."

"I'll give you \$10 for the stock."

"No, Joe, it would be \$10 thrown away on your part."

"I can afford to throw the money away on a long chance."

"If you are really anxious to get them you can have them for the money, but they are really not worth that sum."

So Joe paid the money and took the package, which he carried home with him that afternoon.

It wasn't because he really had any idea that the Golden Argosy mine would ever amount to anything that he bought the stock, but because \$10 didn't cut much of a figure with him, and the impulse to acquire the certificates was irresistible.

He opened the package when he got home and found that the certificates were made out in the name of Henry Baker.

He took out one of them and tacked it up on his wall.

He rewrapped the others up and put the bundle in his closet.

CHAPTER XI.

THE STRANGEST TIP IN WALL STREET.

It wasn't often that Joe looked over the personal advertisements in the morning daily that was recognized as having more advertisements of that kind than all the other dailies put together, but something induced him to do so next morning, and one of them attracted his attention.

It ran as follows:

"One hundred dollars will be paid to the person furnishing information that will lead to the discovery of the whereabouts of William Smith, of Goldfield, Nevada, who arrived in this city on May 27, registered at the Astor House, and two days after disappeared unaccountably. (Then followed a personal description of Smith.) Address or call on Howard Nostrand, stock broker, No. -- Broad Street."

The points that attracted Joe in the advertisement were: First, the name, which answered to that of the prospector who made the original discovery of gold ore in the Golden Argosy property; second, the fact that Smith came from Goldfield, and that he disappeared on the day that Joe had his encounter with the insurance schemers, who had obtained the corpse of a stranger, evidently from Goldfield by reason of the check on the Goldfield National Bank found by Fletcher on his person, who had dropped dead that day in Jersey City; third, the description of Smith, which seemed to correspond in a general way with the corpse Joe saw stretched out on the table in the room of the old house by the river; and, lastly, the fact that Broker Nostrand was interested in securing information about the missing man.

"I guess I could make that \$100," thought Joe, "but as it might interfere with the efforts of the police to catch the insurance swindler I won't try for it. I don't care enough about Mr. Nostrand to oblige him, anyway. I'm willing to bet that the corpse in the case is William Smith. I'll examine the signature on the check to-night with the aid of a magnifying glass and see if it bears any resemblance to William Smith. If it does, why, maybe I'll claim the reward later on

when the police have caught the swindler or given up the case."

That morning he accidentally discovered that a syndicate had been formed to corner and loan L. & D. shares.

This was too good a thing to let get by him, so he went to the little bank and bought, on margin, 500 shares of L. & D. at 115.

After supper he put the check under the magnifying glass.

The writing was such a scrawl that but for the fact that he expected it stood for William Smith he never could have told that it was.

He finally came to the conclusion that it was Smith, though he could not have been willing to swear to it.

He held the check close up to the flame of the gas-jet, and while he was looking at it a curious change came over the paper.

An oblong diagram came out on the back of the check.

About it appeared the words, "Golden Argosy."

Near one end showed a small square with the word, "Shaft."

From that ran a line with numerous branches.

The line was marked "Main tunnel," the branches, "Off-shoot A, B, C," etc.

An inch from "Off-shoot B" was a small cross marked "the lost ledge—twelve feet."

A cross with the four cardinal points of the compass showed the bearings of the small cross from the end of "Off-shoot D."

Joe gazed spellbound at the strange discovery he had made, and as he gazed the diagram gradually faded out until the back of the check resumed its ordinary appearance.

"Jumping grasshoppers!" he exclaimed. "What have I struck?"

Once more he held the check up to the heat of the gas and the diagram came out as plainly as before.

"There's something in this discovery of mine," he said.

"That diagram wasn't sketched out in invisible ink for nothing. It refers to the Golden Argosy mine, and tips off the spot where the continuation of the rich ledge that disappeared begins again. According to the statement written down it is twelve feet in a northeasterly direction from the end of branch tunnel D. Smith, who was a prospector, doubtless made this discovery as he made the original one, and made it lately, that is, within a short time of his coming East. No wonder he was careful with this seemingly worthless cancelled check, and sewed it up in his pants so he wouldn't lose it. I wonder what brought him East? To raise money to develop the new lead? If that is so, how about this James Hawley, who advertised for a partner to help him buy up the control of the mining property? And how comes it that Broker Nostrand is desirous to find out what has become of William Smith and where he is? Smith must have called on him as soon as he reached this city and maybe tried to interest him in the mine."

Joe was smart enough to see that he had come in possession of a valuable tip that might lead to his fortune.

"It's the strangest tip that ever happened in Wall Street, though I did get hold of it over in New Jersey, for it's directly connected with Wall Street," he said.

He determined to take the check down to the office next day and show it to Mr. Drew.

This he did, but when the broker failed to appear at the office at his customary time, Joe asked the cashier if he was coming to the city that day.

"No, he won't be here to-day, nor, in fact, for several days. He went to Chicago by the eight o'clock express."

"Is that so?" said Joe. "All right."

That afternoon about two he met Dick at the entrance to the building.

While he was talking to him, Broker Nostrand came along and stopped to talk with an acquaintance.

"Say, Dick," said Joe, suddenly, "I'll bet you never saw a Goldfield bank check."

"No. Have you seen one?"

"Yes, I've got a cancelled one in my pocket."

"Let's see it," said Dick.

Joe took the envelope out of his pocket and showed Dick the check.

"It was drawn on the Goldfield National Bank for the insignificant sum of \$10."

"How did you get hold of it?"

"Oh, by accident."

"What are you keeping it for? It's no good. It's been paid."

"I'm keeping it as a curiosity."

"The signature on it is a curiosity. I never saw such an unintelligible one in my life. Just like two wavy lines."

"Can you make it out?"

"Not if my life depended on it. I'll bet you can't read it, either."

"What will you bet?"

"I won't bet, for you may know the man who wrote it, but I'll gamble on it if I had the check and showed it to you off-hand, as you are showing it to me, you couldn't decipher it," said Dick.

"I won't deny that. I've examined the name under a microscope, but I couldn't swear to what it stands for even at that. I only had an idea that I know what the name is."

"Well, what do you think the name is?"

"William Smith," answered Joe.

As he spoke, Nostrand, who had been listening to their conversation, uttered an ejaculation.

"Well, I must get on. So long!" and Dick rushed away.

As Joe started for the elevator the broker stepped toward him.

"Ha! Where did you get that check?" cried Nostrand, seizing hold of the boy. "Give it to me. It is mine!"

"No, it is not yours, and you shan't have it," replied Joe.

The struggle that ensued attracted a policeman.

"What's the trouble?" asked the officer.

"This boy has a check that belongs to me," said Nostrand, "and I want it."

"This check does not belong to him. His name is Howard Nostrand. You can see for yourself, officer, that no such name is on the check, and, furthermore, that it is not a New York check. It was drawn on the Goldfield National Bank of Goldfield, Nevada, to the order of Self, and the money was collected by the man himself, for it is stamped paid, and is no longer of any value to anybody," said Joe.

The policeman saw all that Joe pointed out.

"How came you to get that check?" he asked Joe.

"I see no reason to make any explanation on the subject. It belongs to me and I propose to hold on to it."

"Why do you claim that check?" the policeman asked Nostrand.

"Because it belongs to a client of mine who has mysteriously disappeared."

The officer pricked up his ears at that.

"Do you suspect that he has met with foul play?"

"I think it more than likely. This check, though useless, I admit, was in his possession when he called at my office the day after his arrival in the city. He registered at the Astor House, and the following day he left the hotel and never returned. That was all of a month ago, and his valise is still at the hotel."

The policeman thought the matter was assuming too serious an aspect for him to attempt to settle, so he suggested that both parties go with him to the precinct station-house and have it adjusted, if possible, by the captain.

At that Nostrand changed front.

"I prefer to settle this matter with the boy myself. He's messenger for a broker in this building I do business with sometimes. If he will accompany me to my office I think the matter can be adjusted," he said, looking at Joe.

Ordinarily the boy would have refused to go with Nostrand, for he didn't like the man, but rather than have the case brought up before the captain of the precinct, with the prospect of going to court, he was willing to agree to the broker's suggestion.

"I will go with you," he said.

"Very well. That takes the matter out of your hands, officer. Sorry that you lost your time over it," said Nostrand, slipping the policeman a \$5 bill.

The officer took the money and walked away, and Joe went with Nostrand to his office, the pair not exchanging a word till they got there.

CHAPTER XII.

JOE BUYS CONTROL OF THE GOLDEN ARGOSY.

"Sit down," said Nostrand when they entered his private room.

Joe took a seat and the broker threw his hat on his desk and pushed up the cover, seating himself in his pivot-chair.

"Now then, young man, how came you to get possession of that check?" he asked.

"Why are you so anxious to know, Mr. Nostrand?" said Joe, coolly.

"Because that check belongs to a man named William Smith, a prospector from Goldfield, who called on me a

month ago, the day after he arrived in this city. I expected to do business with him, for he made an appointment with me for the following day, which he failed to keep. As the business he had to transact was very important, I sent to the Astor House, where he had put up, and learned that he had gone out. To cut the matter short, Smith never returned to the hotel from that day to this, which is a very singular circumstance, and leads me to believe that something happened to him. Being a stranger, he might have been enticed into some crooked saloon, drugged, robbed and done away with. Now, the fact that you have that check in your possession shows that you must know something about the mystery of Smith's disappearance, otherwise I cannot see how you would have it. I want you to tell me all about it. I will make it worth your while. I have advertised in the papers for information that will lead to the present whereabouts of Smith, if he is alive. I offered to pay \$100 for that information. If you can throw any light on the subject I will hand you that sum."

"I guess I can earn the money," said Joe.

"Good!" said Nostrand, in a tone of satisfaction. "Do you know where William Smith is?"

"I have an idea, if this check belonged to him."

"It did belong to him."

"Is that his name signed to it?"

"That's a matter of no importance. The check having been paid is as valueless as any piece of paper of its size."

"It would appear so. What do you want it for, then?"

"I don't want it except as a clue to Smith."

"All right. I am going to keep it for the same reason."

"But you said you had an idea where the man is."

"I have."

"He is alive, then?"

"I regret to say he is not."

"He is dead?" cried Nostrand, in a tone of intense disappointment.

"Very much so."

"How do you know?"

"I must decline to state how I happen to know that fact, but it is so."

"Why are you making a secret of it? Don't you know that if I should bring this matter to the attention of the police that you would be compelled to tell the truth, and any objection on your part to do so would cause suspicion to rest on you?"

"That doesn't worry me in the least."

Nostrand regarded him curiously.

"Why not?"

"Because I could easily satisfy the authorities about this Smith."

"Why do you decline to satisfy me, then? Don't you want to make the \$100?"

"I am not particular about it, though \$100 is not to be sneezed at."

"Look here, young man, I don't like your attitude in this matter."

"I am sorry, but I will say this much—if you can show any vital reasons why the present whereabouts of the remains of William Smith, if the remains are really his, which I am inclined to believe they are, from the fact of your recognizing this check, should be made known to you, call on the captain of the Jersey City police and state your case to him. He might be willing to enlighten you."

"Then Smith met with foul play in Jersey City?" said Nostrand.

"He did meet with foul play, but not in the way you suppose."

"You are still talking in riddles. Why are you making so much mystery of this matter?"

"Because the Jersey City police have an important case in hand in which the remains of Smith play a part, and it might defeat the ends of justice if I said anything about it to you. If you are not satisfied with this explanation call on Mr. Drew and speak to him about the matter. He is in Chicago now, but will return in a few days."

"What does Mr. Drew know about this thing?" asked Nostrand, clearly much surprised.

"He knows all that I know about it, for I told him."

"If Smith or his remains, as you assert he is dead, is involved in some criminal case, how came you to be mixed up in it?"

"That is a matter I don't care to talk about other than to say that I came into it by accident. I am a prospector and must hold my tongue on the outside. When the rocky part

ties have been caught the story will be printed in the papers, and then you will find out all about it."

"You might have said this in the first place and then I'd have understood why you were so close. So William Smith is really dead?"

"A man, not yet identified, is dead, but as this check was on his person and you recognize it as having been in William Smith's possession when you saw him, the presumption is that the unidentified man is Smith," said Joe.

"Was he murdered and robbed?"

"He was not."

"How came he to meet death, then?"

"He dropped dead of heart disease in Jersey City."

"And how came his body to be mixed up in a criminal case?"

"That I may not say. It is a police secret."

"Which you are acquainted with?"

"Yes."

"Have you any objection to permitting me to examine that check?"

"As it is connected with the police case it must not pass out of my hands."

"Why should you hold it? Why do not the police retain it?"

"I must decline to answer that question."

"Will you let me look at it in your hands?"

"I will if you promise not to touch it."

"I promise."

Joe took out Check 765 and held it close to the broker's eyes.

"Turn it over," he said, after a momentary inspection.

Joe did so.

The only thing visible on the back besides the indorsement close to the top was the signature of the rascal Fletcher in lead pencil.

Nostrand regarded it with critical attention, and then looked closely at the paper from one end to the other.

If he had expected to find something to interest him he was disappointed.

"I see the indorsement and that lead pencil signature," he said. "Is that the way the back of the check looked when you got it?"

"There has been no change or alteration made in it since I got it."

"Do you know the meaning of that name Fletcher on it?"

"I do."

"Do you know how it came to be on the check?"

"I do. I saw it written there by a man who is now in custody."

"Then you are holding that check as a piece of evidence against him?"

"Yes, and for another reason, which I won't explain."

Nostrand picked up a magnifying glass from his desk and went carefully over the back of the check.

Joe offered no objection to his doing so, for he knew that the secret of Check 765 could not be brought to light that way.

He alone knew how to get at it.

"That's all," said Nostrand, sitting back in his chair.

"What did you expect to find on that check that you examined it so closely?" asked Joe, innocently.

"Nothing—that is, not exactly. I had an idea that Smith had written something on it, and I was curious to find out what it was."

"If that indorsement is a fair specimen of his writing you wouldn't have been able to have read anything he might have written," said Joe.

"I suppose not—I suppose not," said Nostrand. "Well, I won't detain you any longer."

"I'm glad to hear it. I'll have some trouble squaring myself with the cashier for staying out so long."

Nostrand dashed a few words off on a pad, signed it and handed it to Joe.

"Give that to the cashier," he said.

Joe looked at the writing when he got outside and found that Nostrand had written the following:

"I took your messenger to my office and detained him there for half an hour."
HOWARD NOSTRAND.

During the next few days Joe, at every chance, dropped into some mining broker's office and inquired if the trader had any Golden Argosy stock lying around.

In this way he picked up 30,000 shares for less than half a cent a share—the lot costing him about \$100, which, considering that the mine was regarded as worthless, was a big

price for the stock, but, then, the brokers wanted something for the certificates, even if they knew they had no market value.

By that time L. & D. had advanced to 122.

On the day Mr. Drew returned from Chicago it went to 130.

In the meantime, Joe wrote to James Hawley, saying he had seen his advertisement in a Western paper, and asked what inducements were offered for the investment of a small amount of capital.

He did not state that he was a Wall Street messenger boy, and so Hawley, when he got his letter, supposed the writer was a man, and he wrote back that he had only a little money himself, but being a prospector, he wanted to buy out the controlling interest of some mining property that could be got cheap, and had selected the Golden Argosy because the controlling owners had no further use for it and were willing to sell their stock for a song—\$2,500 would take the whole thing, which comprised 260,000 shares of stock, the title deeds, machinery on the ground and all the visible property of the company.

"I can put up \$500," he wrote. "If you can raise \$2,000, and are willing to go in with me I think we can make a living out of the property. There are 240,000 shares scattered about the country, half of which are in this vicinity. Most of them could be bought in later for next to nothing, and then we'd practically own the mine outright. Let me hear what you will do."
Yours respectfully,

"JAMES HAWLEY."

Joe wrote back, inclosing a draft for \$100, and told Hawley to get a thirty-day option on the property at \$2,500.

"You may expect to see me with the money in about three weeks," he said. "Of course, if I'm to put up four times as much money as you do I shall require a proportionate interest in the property. If this meets with your concurrence you can have a contract drawn to that effect and we will sign it."

The day after he sent the letter off L. & D. reached 135 and Joe sold out.

His profit on this deal was \$10,000.

Hawley wrote back that he agreed to anything his correspondent advanced, and said the contract would be drawn giving Joe a four-fifths interest in the controlling interest of the Golden Argosy property.

That was satisfactory to Joe, and he notified Hawley to that effect.

Within the time stated his vacation came around and he asked Mr. Drew for two weeks, as he had to go West on business.

He got it and started for Goldfield.

Hawley met him at the station and was greatly surprised to find that his prospective partner was a boy.

"That needn't worry you, Mr. Hawley, as long as I have the money to put up. Besides, I'm a Wall Street boy, with three years' experience in New York's financial district. You will find that will count for something," said Joe.

So the business was put through, and the firm of Sturges & Hawley took over the control of the Golden Argosy property for the sum of \$2,500.

CHAPTER XIII.

CONCLUSION.

When the business was concluded, Joe invited Hawley to dine with him at his hotel.

After the meal they went to Joe's room to talk matters over.

Hawley outlined his plans and Joe listened to them.

"Your plans are all right, Mr. Hawley, but if you followed them I'm afraid our enterprise would hardly pan out," said Joe.

"How so?" replied the prospector, looking at him in surprise.

"Because you are going at the thing blind."

"I am going at it in the only way that my experience as a prospector suggests. The only way to find gold ore is to hunt for it," he said.

"I know that, but if I could show you a better way wouldn't you be willing to adopt it?"

"Of course, but I don't see how—"

"Quite natural. You don't see how a boy who knows nothing about mining, and has never before been within half a distance of mining property, can show you, an experienced prospector, how to make a ten-strike."

"I admit I do not."

"Well, Mr. Hawley, if I hadn't seen your advertisement I should have bought the Golden Argosy myself."

"You astonish me."

"I have no doubt of it, but I intend to astonish you still more before I am done. Before I corresponded with you at all I had evidence that the Golden Argosy property was a winner."

"What evidence?"

"A tip that came into my hands in the strangest way in the world. Now that you are my partner, I will tell you the story, but, of course, you will keep it strictly to yourself."

Joe then told him all about his experience with the insurance swindlers, who were still at large, and about Check 765, without stating anything about the tip.

"You had a great experience, Sturgess, but you have not mentioned the tip."

"Here it is," said Joe, showing the check.

"Why, that is one of Bill Smith's cancelled checks. How came you to get it?"

"William Smith was the corpse I told you about."

"You don't say! Poor Bill! I knew him well. He originally discovered the gold in the Golden Argosy, but the ledge petered out and the whole thing went up the spout. I believe that ledge is still to be found somewhere on the property, as I have told you, and that was my object in getting a partner to help me make further developments."

"I know," said Joe. "Well, you don't have to go hunting for that ledge. I can put my finger right on it."

Joe got up and wrapped the check around the electric light bulb, for Goldfield lights its streets and principal buildings with electricity, the same as any other modern city.

There is not a great deal of heat thrown off by a small bulb, but there was enough, by giving it time, to bring the diagram of the mine out on the back of the check.

Then Joe showed it to his mining partner, and before it faded away the prospector had all the details in his mind.

"If that tip proves to be the real thing there will be a fortune instead of a living in the mine for both of us, but chiefly for you. You must buy up all the outstanding stock you can find, and then when the discovery becomes known there will be only a few outsiders to participate in the cutting of the melon," said Hawley.

"I'll attend to that right away. I have plenty of money to do it with, and enough to put into the working of the mine without putting up any stock for sale."

They talked till Joe said it was time for him to turn in, and then they parted for the night.

The next day, after another interview, Hawley went to the property to begin private work to open up the lost ledge, while Joe went around to a broker and gave him an order to buy up every share of the Golden Argosy he could find at the lowest price.

In a few days the broker turned over to him about 100,000 shares.

That made 140,000 shares he had bought in of the 240,000 outstanding.

The books showed that fully 60,000 more were held in the East, and the balance in different parts of the West.

At the end of the week Hawley found the ledge at the point indicated, and he and Joe held a jollification over the fruition of their hopes.

Nothing further was to be done until all the stock had been bought that could be obtained.

Joe sent in his resignation to Mr. Drew and told him he would explain the reason when he got back to New York.

Fifteen thousand more shares were picked up in Denver, Kansas City and other places, then Joe started East.

When he arrived home he was joyfully received by his folks.

He had written them all about his success with the Golden Argosy mine.

He called on his late boss and told him everything.

Needless to say that Mr. Drew was amazed to find that his messenger had blossomed out into a real mine owner, and of a property that promised great results.

Joe at once opened an office in the same building, and put the name of his mine on the door.

He went around among the mining brokers and secured 35,000 shares more at a mere bagatelle.

That left only 50,000 shares out, and Joe made no further effort to hunt those shares up.

Of the 450,000 shares purchased, which included the 260,000 controlling interest first bought, Joe kept 300,000 and gave Hawley 150,000.

That gave him a three-fifths interest in the whole mine;

Hawley a three-tenths interest, or half as much as Joe, and left one-fifth divided among a large number of small, scattered stockholders.

The company was reorganized, with Joe as president, Hawley as vice-president and general manager, and a Goldfield man as secretary-treasurer.

Dick Singleton was presented with ten shares of stock and elected a director.

Mr. Drew also accepted ten shares and consented to act as a director.

Dick resigned as messenger and went to work as Joe's general assistant in the Wall Street office, and was in full charge of same when Joe was out of the city.

While these things were under way, and before the announcement was made public that the lost ledge in the Golden Argosy had been found, the police rounded up the insurance swindlers.

The man Jim, whose other name was Barron, waited two months before making a move to collect the four insurance policies for \$10,000 each he held on the life of the insured, who proved to be his brother-in-law.

Then, believing that everything was safe, he had the remains of the corpse dug out of the ruins and carried to his house.

He notified the four insurance companies to identify the skeleton of his alleged brother-in-law.

They each sent a representative, who viewed all that was left of William Smith, took Barron's sworn statement and made their reports.

The manager of the claim department of each company had not forgotten the notice he had received from the Jersey City police.

The police were notified and put onto Barron.

That individual's house was shadowed, and one night the police called and arrested not only Barron but his disguised brother-in-law and the man Decker.

As Fletcher was still in prison, the authorities now had the whole bunch in their hands.

Joe was sent for and he recognized Barron as the man who had hired him to take the package to the old house; Decker as the man who had done the dentistry work on the corpse, and the brother-in-law of Barron as the man who had abducted him from Zolliver & Co.'s office in the cab.

Indictments were found against the four and they were eventually put on trial, convicted and sent to prison for long terms.

As soon as the new Golden Argosy company was in working order the discovery of the lost ledge was made public and created something of a sensation in Goldfield.

The mine was relisted on the Goldfield Exchange, but there was little stock in sight, though 25 cents a share was offered for it.

Some 25,000 shares turned up between Wall Street and Jersey City and was daily dealt in at Goldfield quotations.

Work in the mine was begun on a small scale at first, and the ore assayed high from the start.

Joe advanced the money as a loan to the company to carry on the work.

Immediately after the arrest of the insurance swindlers, Joe took possession of the remains of Smith, and had them sent out to Goldfield and buried there.

Over the grave he put a fine granite shaft to the dead prospector's memory.

Six months later Golden Argosy stock was selling for 50 cents a share, and three months afterward it went to \$1.

That made Joe's holdings worth \$300,000.

A few months later he turned down an offer of half a million for his interest in the mine.

Before the year was out the company paid its first dividend and kept it up every three months thereafter.

Joe was now received as a welcome visitor at Mr. Drew's home, and he took advantage of the fact to pay attention to Grace Drew, to whom he in time became engaged, with her parents' consent.

The Golden Argosy continued a great paying success, its stock going up to \$4, and by the time Joe married Miss Drew he was regarded as a very rich young man, and this wealth all came to him through the strangest tip in Wall Street.

Next week's issue will contain "A SHORT CUT TO FORTUNE; AND THE SMART BOY WHO FOUND IT."

SEND POSTAL FOR OUR FREE CATALOGUE.

CURRENT NEWS

Harry Pullman, twenty-three years old, of Brooklyn, N. Y., is in a serious condition at a local hospital from the loss of his left arm, which was severed by the wheels of a trolley car at Buffalo, N. Y., January 2. "I purposely put my left arm under the wheels of a street car in order to have it cut off," said Pullman in a sworn statement to-day. "I was commanded by Heaven to do this, and I did it of my own free will. I am not a drinking man. I knew and realized what I was doing."

An icy wedding trip, with the bridegroom and bride beating their way, was revealed to-day when word was received at Wilmington, Del., January 2, that Henry Hoffman, twenty-two years old, of Shamokin, Penn., and his bride, who was Miss Daisy Ray, nineteen years old, of Sunbury, Penn., rode from Philadelphia to Reading, fifty-eight miles, in the icebox of a refrigerator car. When the pair went to the Rev. G. L. Wolfe recently they told him they had been in Wilmington since December 26 and had lost their money.

Offley Wee Blackie, champion Pomeranian, arrived at San Francisco, January 2, in a private car and immediately disappeared, to be relayed along through three pairs of hands to a mysterious woman, who paid \$5,000 for him. The dog weighs three pounds and four ounces, but the woman who wanted him would have paid more than the \$96 an ounce that he cost had it been necessary to get him. Offley Wee's ticket from New York to Chicago cost \$525. Rather, his tickets cost that amount, because his custodian had to buy seventeen of them at \$35 apiece so that the dog might have a special Pullman car to himself.

Postmaster W. H. Davis, of Pittsburgh, contemplates purchasing heavy wagons in which to handle the many sample bricks and steel products dumped into the post-office to-day for transmission by the parcel post. More than a score of bricks and terra cotta manufacturers in this city annually send several carloads of bricks and hollow tile to architects and prospective builders throughout the country. The postmaster had several inquiries from brick manufacturers last week as to whether the bricks would be accepted by him. He replied that he would have to accept them if they did not weigh over eleven pounds and were so wrapped as not to damage other mail.

As a reward for their fidelity during the year 1912, employes of the United States Steel Corporation will receive a bonus amounting to \$1,500,000. This is the annual distribution by the trust to all employes holding its shares under the profit-sharing plan inaugurated in 1903. The bonus is about the same as that paid out of the profits of the corporation last year, and will be participated in by more than 65,000 employes who own preferred and common stock. It was estimated early this year that employes held about 300,000 shares of common and preferred, or

\$30,000,000 par. Closely following the announcement that employes will be allowed this year to subscribe for common stock it is stated that it is not probable that a limit will be placed upon the total number of shares to be offered. Because of this it would not be surprising if more shares were taken by employes in 1913 than in 1912. In 1911 a total of 37,000 men subscribed for 30,600 shares of preferred and 30,750 shares of common.

The terms of the Russo-Mongolian treaty of November 3 were published in Peking, December 19. The Chinese regard them as far more comprehensive than the Manchurian agreements which finally led to the Russo-Japanese war. The features to which the Chinese particularly object as infringing China's sovereignty are the right they give Russia to send consuls and consular guards to Mongolian points and to establish postoffices. The treaty also accords to Russian subjects freedom to trade, establish manufactories, buy land, to arrange concessions for mining, fishing and forestry, and for the navigation of the rivers flowing into Russian territory. Russia is obstructing the negotiations in connection with the loan to China of \$125,000,000 by the six-power group of bankers, according to the Peking correspondent of "The Daily Mail." Russia takes the ground that this group cannot lend money to aid Chinese military preparations in Mongolia.

Nineteen hundred and twelve was a year notable for the large number of small failures reported. Thus, the aggregate number for the full calendar year, as reported to Bradstreet's, was 13,832, an increase of 9.3 per cent. over 1911, which year in turn showed an increase of 9.2 per cent. over 1910, and there was shown a decrease from 1908, the year of after-panic strain, of only 1.5 per cent. With the exception of the last mentioned year, in fact, 1912 was the most prolific year in business casualties that there had been since 1896, and was surpassed only three times in the last thirty years. As regards liabilities, however, the showing was relatively better. Thus, although the number of failures in 1912 exceeded the number in 1911 and 1910 by 1,186 and 2,259, respectively, the liabilities, which aggregated \$197,995,457, exceeded those of the above years by only about \$10,000,000, or 5 per cent., in each instance. The percentage of assets to liabilities was relatively low, namely, 49.9 per cent., as against 54.2 per cent. in 1911 and 49.8 per cent. in 1910. Despite the large increase in number of casualties, so great was the increase in those in business that the percentage of all those in business failing was only 82-100 of 1 per cent., as against 77-100 of 1 per cent. in the preceding year. There were fewer failures in the Northwest than in 1911, a slight increase only in the West, but considerable increases in the other sections of the country. The middle group and the South furnished the larger portion of the increased liabilities, while the West, Far West and Northwest showed smaller failure damage.

THE BOY DIVERS

OR,

THE MYSTERY OF THE SUNKEN SHIP

By GASTON GARNE

(A SERIAL STORY)

CHAPTER II. (Continued)

It was death to struggle further into the breakers, and it was only after a strife with the waves and storm that taxed their courage and endurance to the utmost that the crew made the beach again.

"The life-line! The life-line! It's the only hope of the doomed vessel now!" shouted old Dan, as the boy divers reached the beach with their brave comrades.

The great cannon, carrying the ball to which the life-line was made fast, was already in place. The gunner sighted over the lights of the vessel which was now believed to be pounding on the outer reef.

It meant that the cannon-ball carrying the life-line should be discharged over the vessel. Then the line would drop across her deck, and being made fast by the crew, a communication would be established with the shore.

Upon the line was a hawser rigged to run over the line to and from the vessel, and secured to it the seamen might be drawn through the sea to the beach.

The cannon was discharged, and as its dull boom thundered above the roar of the storm the ball carrying the life-line went hurtling over the waves.

But a chorus of wild, despairing screams just then ascended from the waves, telling that the imperiled seamen were engulfed. It was believed then that the vessel had gone to pieces on the reef, for the lights vanished.

Ere long the waves began to cast up the debris of the wreck along the coast, and this was the proof that the worst had befallen the ill-fated vessel.

Along the coast the life-savers patroled the sea, with their storm-lanterns in hand, seeking for the waifs of the wreck who might be cast up by the waves.

The old diver with Dick and Mark joined in the search for the victims.

Ere long they stumbled upon the body of a man. He had been cast up on the beach beyond the reach of the cruel sea, and, at first, it was supposed that he was dead. But upon resorting to the customary measures of restoring the drowned, the divers detected certain signs of life, which encouraged them to increased efforts.

They bore the half drowned man to old Dan's cabin, and there they finally succeeded in restoring the man from the wreck to consciousness.

He was evidently about fifty years of age, clad in a coarse seaman's garb, and everything about him seemed to proclaim that he was a common sailor.

But, although he regarded his senses, his mind was not clear. In a state of delirium he lay muttering and tossing before the warm fire in the old diver's cabin for hours. The good doctor from the village was called and he ministered to the sufferer as best he could. Meantime, the divers learned that he whom they had rescued was the only person saved from the wreck.

Toward morning, while the boys and old Dan watched beside him, the sailor's mutterings became somewhat intelligible, and several times they heard him mention the name Captain Wayne Lynn.

Intensely excited, Dick exclaimed:

"He repeats the name of Vadna's father, the captain of the lost treasure ship. What can it mean?"

Almost in the next breath the shipwrecked sailor cried out in delirium:

"We are lost! The Conqueror is doomed with all her gold!"

The boy divers and their old instructor stared at each other, trembling with excitement.

"Heaven has sent us a clew to the lost treasure ship!" cried Dick.

"It must be so. Evidently this man was one of the crew of that vessel," assented old Dan, solemnly.

"Then he must know where the sea engulfed Vadna's inheritance. He must—he shall live to reveal this great secret!" exclaimed Dick.

CHAPTER III.

THE SEA WOLVES.

The life-savers and the boy divers were not the only ones abroad upon the coast, near Seminole Point, that night of storm and peril.

A band of a dozen rough-looking men—evidently water-side characters—were wandering along the coast, watching the lights of the doomed vessel on the rocks before she went to pieces.

The leader of the party was a tall man, attired like his comrades, but he was evidently one of a different class. He kept his storm hat drawn down over his eyes, and the collar of his waterproof muffled his face to the extent that his features could not be seen.

"The shoal beacon was not set in-time, else the vessel would have been dashed in upon the reef there, some miles to the south, beyond the woods that shut out the true light on Seminole Point. The plunder of the wreck is lost to us, and we must take care that we are not discovered by the life-savers," said the muffled leader of the sea wolves.

"Hello! Yonder is a bright light, in the cabin of old Dan, the diver!" exclaimed one of the band.

"Yes," assented the chief, "and we must keep well clear of the cabin. The old diver is a keen one, and I more than half believe he already suspects me."

"Dan, the diver, is dangerous to us. He is likely to cause us trouble yet. I, for one, would like to send him to the bottom of the sea," remarked another.

"Hush! Yonder is a moving light. Some one comes! Quick, lads! This way!"

The leader of the party led his men behind a mass of jutting rocks, and concealed there they watched the moving lights.

They drew nearer and presently old Dan, with Dick and Mark, the boy divers, came in sight, bearing the sea-man they had picked up on the beach between them.

The concealed men watched the party until they entered old Dan's cabin.

Then they conversed and the chief finally said:

"The divers have found one of the men from the wreck. Now do you all remain here while I advance to the cabin. Perhaps I may there learn some particulars regarding the lost vessel. At all events, I mean to act the part of a spy."

"All right, Captain Onslow," assented one of the band, and then the leader crept stealthily away.

He was really Captain Onslow, the owner of the old coast mansion, and the foe of the boys divers and beautiful Vadna Lynn.

The suspicions entertained by old Dan, regarding the man who held the mortgage on the old homestead, which sheltered Vadna, her uncle and the boy divers was correct.

Certainly Onslow was in league with the secret band of wreckers who had long cursed that portion of the coast with their evil presence.

Posing as an honest man in the light of day, by night Onslow was the wrecker chief, and this double life he had long led, conducting himself with so much cunning and secrecy that the proof of his two-fold character had not yet been discovered.

In the light of this revelation it seemed that Onslow might have it in his power to bring dire perils upon the brave boys whom he hated.

Aided by his villainous band, he might resort to secret violence against them and Vadna.

Onslow cautiously approached the old diver's cabin and gained a window.

There he crouched down in the deep shadows and listened. He was able to hear all that was said by the inmates of the cabin.

The spy heard the delirious ravings of the man from the wreck: He caught the name of Captain Wayne Lynn when the sailor uttered it.

Thereafter Onslow evinced new and intense interest. He had heard the story of the lost treasure ship that carried Vadna's inheritance. The legend was common property among the people of the coast village.

Onslow remained at his post under the window while the night wore on. His small, beady black eyes glanced avariciously, and his evil, plotting mind was occupied with startling ideas.

It was surely an adverse fate that led Onslow to play the spy at the cabin of the old diver that night, for he was still listening at the window when, as recorded, the shipwrecked sailor cried out, in his delirium:

"We are lost! The Conqueror is doomed with all her gold!"

After that utterance the sailor made no further connected revelation, nor did his delirium subside.

It was decided at length by old Dan and the boys that the condition of the man, whom they now fully believed held the secret of the lost treasure-ship, demanded that the doctor should be called to his side again without further delay.

"He must be saved. Oh, think what vital interest may depend upon his restoration! Vadna's inheritance is at stake. This man can tell us where the treasure-ship went down!" cried Dick.

"And once we know that, we will search the bottom of the sea until we find the sunken ship and her cargo of gold!" exclaimed old Dan, who fully shared the excitement and solicitude of his young comrade.

"Mark and I will go to the village for the doctor," Dick volunteered.

"Yes, and we'll not return without him," assented Mark.

"And meanwhile I'll watch beside the unfortunate sailor here. Hasten, boys! Run as fast as you can! The man's life means the salvation of your uncle—the defeat of Onslow!" said old Dan, urgently.

The boys hastened from the cabin.

But they saw nothing of Onslow at the window.

The villain saw the two lads disappear in the gloom, and then he crept away.

Swiftly he made his way back to his men, muttering:

"I see the game clear before me. The shipwrecked sailor must never reveal his secrets of the lost treasure ship to Dan Tyson or the boy divers. No, no! Before the lads can return to the cabin I must spirit the man from the wreck away. I'll do it! He shall become my secret captive. To me alone shall he reveal where the treasure ship sunk beneath the waves. This means a fortune, and it shall all be mine!"

Having rejoined his men, Onslow quickly acquainted them with his design to abduct the sailor and the plan to accomplish the desired end was at once arranged.

The sea-wolves were all residents of the neighborhood, who, like their leader, posed as honest men. But an oath of secrecy bound them all and there had never been a traitor in the band.

The wreckers were known to old Dan and the boy divers in the characters they assumed by day. All feared recognition.

(To be Continued)

FACTS WORTH READING

"JACK HORNER" A REALITY.

Few people know that the nursery legend of "Little Jack Horner" conceals a real tragedy. At the Reformation the chief of an abbey in the west of England resolved to surrender, and in token thereof to send the deeds of the religious house to Henry VIII., at Whitehall. For security's sake the abbot placed the documents in a pie-dish and covered them with crust. The dish, without a word about the contents, he gave to a lout, Jack Horner, with instructions to carry it by road to the King in London.

About half-way, Jack Horner became ravenous and came to the conclusion that it was foolish of him to starve while he was the custodian of a pie. So he broke the crust and put in his thumb and pulled out—a roll of parchments! The disgusted Jack Horner chucked the lot into an adjacent brook.

The non-arrival of the deeds caused bluff King Hal to suspect the abbot of contumacy, so his Majesty commanded that the poor cleric should be hanged.

TO EXPLORE THE UPPER AMAZON.

Algot Lange, on the eve of his departure into the unexplored Upper Amazon, gave a small dinner the other night to some of his most intimate friends, among whom was Commodore E. C. Benedict and Caspar Whitney, in the Hofbrau Restaurant, at Eighty-third street and Broadway. Mr. Lange will sail for the northern end of the Amazon, and will dwell among the strange tribes that inhabit the various tributaries for three years or more.

"I want to say goodbye to you, gentlemen," said Mr. Lange. "I am sailing for Brazil in the morning—that is, if I can get up the gangplank. I hope to return in about three years. Just two years ago, on Christmas evening, I sat with my wife with but 13 cents and two ham sandwiches in my pockets. I went to the American Geographical Society a short while later and then things changed. To-morrow I shall head an expedition of my own."

Mr. Lange does not look like the explorer who, without any experience, traveled and lived among the head-hunting tribes of the upper tributaries of the almost unknown Amazon. He is slight, young, quite pale and does not look the part of the intrepid explorer that he is known to be.

\$2,000,000 PARKS FOR PARIS.

The City Council of Paris, on January 3, by a vote of 67 to 8, voted to acquire from the Government the fortifications and adjacent military zone. It is purposed to transform the tract into parks and recreation grounds.

The acquisition of the land, which has been the subject of negotiations between the State and City Councils for more than thirty years, will constitute the greatest scheme for improvement of the city since Baron Hausmann's cele-

brated plan of 1853, which included beautification of the Bois de Boulogne and the Park of Vincennes and extending the sewer and water supply systems.

The price to be paid by the city for the property will be \$20,000,000. It be turned over in annual installments of \$1,000,000 for the first eight years, and afterward at the rate of \$400,000 annually. The cost of razing the fortifications and laying out new roads and gardens is estimated at \$24,000,000, and about \$2,500,000 will be spent in the erection of a railing around the city.

The councils will sell for building purposes a part of the land acquired. An exact estimate of the sum to be realized in this respect is impossible. However, it is believed that the execution of the project will cost the city, all considered, about \$20,000,000.

DEER CAUGHT IN FISH POND.

A fish hatchery reservoir is intended for the raising of fish, but it seems it may prove to be a deer trap. That was the startling discovery made by Craig, an employe at the Linlithgo Hatchery in Columbia County, N. Y., the other evening when he went up to the large reservoir for the daily inspection.

Craig saw standing in two feet of water a large doe, which weighed at least 140 pounds. The deer seemed completely exhausted and looked up at the man, making a mute but eloquent appeal for assistance. When Craig showed no signs of coming to the rescue the doe waded out toward the centre of the reservoir, in which the water had been lowered to two feet, and, turning toward the ten-foot wall, rushed at the precipitous barrier. She made a gallant effort, leaping fully ten feet. But the attempt was useless, because on top of the ten-foot wall was a four-foot wire fence.

Foreman Rhines and the State Fish Culturist, Dr. Tarleton H. Dean, who happened to be inspecting the hatchery, were summoned to see the novel sight of a deer trapped in a fish pond. They at once considered means to release the imprisoned doe. Dr. Dean suggested a seine, but none of suitable size for the purpose was at hand. Foreman Rhines finally made a lasso, and, after several attempts, managed to fasten the noose around the deer. A dozen men helped haul the struggling animal out of the pond. When released the doe bounded away apparently unhurt. Next day she was seen in one of her accustomed haunts near the hatchery, apparently none the worse for her temporary imprisonment in the State reservoir.

It was ascertained that the doe had been pursued by dogs and in her fright had leaped over the fence inclosing the reservoir, going down over the wall into the water. Fortunately she was there safe from attack by the dogs, which could not reach her. One of the guilty dogs was later apprehended and shot.

Deer are becoming plentiful in several sections of Columbia County. One of the Linlithgo hatchery men saw seven deer one morning not far from the reservoir.

NED, BESS AND MYSELF

OR,

THE SEARCH FOR THE KING'S LOST GOLD MINE

By ED KING

(A SERIAL STORY)

CHAPTER VI. (Continued.)

In ten minutes a messenger came in and said that the soldiers had assembled and we three went out to inspect them.

For an hour the hillmen attacked the town at the eastern end, burning several houses and putting the inhabitants to flight.

Then we marched against them, when a few shots from Ned, Bess and myself so terrified them that they fled, and our men pursued them till they sought shelter in the hidden passes of the mountains and it was impossible to follow them further.

Then we all returned to the chief town and there were great rejoicings and jubilation for days, during which time we talked over our plans for the future.

Ned was of the opinion that we should search for the lost mines at once; but Bess and I urged that we must first get these people in perfect subjection and secure peace throughout the group, and Ned finally came to our way of thinking.

The islanders had long regarded Bess as a more than ordinary person and the king had followed her advice in nearly everything, this giving rise to the rumor which Ned had heard that the place was ruled by a woman.

Her prowess with pistols, her strength and agility, her white skin and the strange things she carried about her had made Bess a wonderful person at the start, and she had taken care to foster the natives' belief in her magical powers from the time she had landed on the island.

We three determined to take up our abode on the large island for a time at least, and messengers were sent to my island and to Ned's telling the people that we had conquered and inviting intercourse between all the islands.

Although we all had no end of a bodyguard to go about with us, there were times when we did not care for attendants; when we liked to put ceremony aside and simply wander off just like two boys and a girl and enjoy ourselves.

One day we set off together, Ned in his sailor clothes, Bess in short skirt and serviceable boots and I in my knockabout clothes, we two boys with rifles slung over our shoulders and Ned with the ax in his belt, Bess with her pistols, simply looking for adventure.

We got it before we were through, but not in the manner we expected.

"There's one thing about it," said Ned, as he brought down a fine, fat bird, which fell somewhere among the rocks along the shore some miles from the town, "we've

got to get more powder and lead somewhere, or we'll have to give up shooting."

"We could use gold bullets," I suggested.

"Yes, or pebbles, but we must have gunpowder. Now where on earth has that bird got to?"

We were scrambling over the rocks, which were thick here, when suddenly Ned cried:

"There it is, but there's a gully or something down there."

He was standing on the edge of a deep depression, at the bottom of which lay the dead bird.

He jumped down from rock to rock a distance of quite thirty feet, and then shouted:

"Oh, I say, Art, Bess, come down if you can. There's a cave here, a regular limestone cave. It goes in quite a distance. You can get down by those trees, Bess."

We got down safely enough, and found the mouth of what seemed a considerable cave of an unmistakable limestone formation.

We went in for about fifty feet and saw many beautiful stalactite formations, what we saw whetting our appetite to see more of the beauties of the strange place.

"Come on," said Ned, enthusiastically; "the place is safe enough if we had lights. We can mark our way on the walls. We can't get lost. This is an elegant cave, and I want to see more of it."

"Yes, but we have no torches."

"Wait a minute. There's lots of fat, piny wood along shore. We'll soon have all the torches we want."

He dashed off, leaving his rifle behind, and returned in about five minutes, the ax in one hand and a bundle of pine torches in the other.

"Now," he said, lighting one of the torches and throwing a ruddy glare through the cavern, "come along and explore the mysteries of Crusoe's Cave."

We went on together, each with a flaming torch, taking care to leave smoke marks on the white walls at frequent intervals to guide us on our way back.

For a time there was only one passage, but at last we came to an open chamber with three passages leading from it.

There were columns and sections of glittering limestone, the floor was white and smooth, and here and there were pools of still water, which reflected the light of our torches like mirrors.

We crossed the chamber, took the central passage and walked on, enjoying new beauties at every step, till at last,

after a long walk, the passage became too low to go on without stooping, and then suddenly ended.

"Let's go back," said Ned, and we retraced our steps, finding our way easily by the smoke on the walls.

We were walking ahead, chatting gayly, and having no thought of danger, when Bess suddenly cried out:

"Ned, Arthur, stop! We have lost our way!"

CHAPTER VII.

LOST IN THE CAVE.

"Lost our way?" I echoed, coming to a sudden pause. "Impossible. We came straight and we are going back the same way."

"Certainly we are," added Ned, but I could detect a certain quaver in his voice which was not reassuring. "There were no side passages as we went along."

"There must have been," said Bess. "Where are the smoke spots left by our torches? Do you see any?"

"Wait here a moment," said I, advancing a few yards and examining both sides of the passage for the telltale marks.

"Well, it's all right, isn't it, Arthur?" I heard Ned presently shout.

No, it was not all right and I knew it was not when Ned called me "Arthur," for he invariably called me "Art" unless something was wrong.

There was not a sign of a smoke mark on the walls and now I noticed that the formation was different from what we had seen.

"No, it isn't," I shouted back. "We've gone wrong. Stay where you are."

I hurried back and then Ned went in the other direction until we quite lost sight of him.

Presently we heard him shouting and we saw the light of his torch.

"Come on!" he cried. "I guess it's all right."

I knew it wasn't by the way he spoke, but I said nothing as I helped Bess along the rough way, lighting a fresh torch for her, as the one she carried was nearly burned out.

"It's no use disguising things," said Ned, as we reached him. "I haven't been able to find our old path, and just ahead of us is a place where four or five roads branch out and I don't know which one to take."

"Would your compass help us any?" asked Bess. "You still have it?"

"Yes," said Ned, taking a little brass compass from his pocket, "but as I didn't notice the direction when we came in, I doubt if it will do us any good now."

"The set is to the north of the beach," said Bess, "and if we took a southerly direction coming in, we must go to the north going out."

"Yes, if we did," said Ned. "But you must remember that we were a long way from town and the shore curves. We may have been going west when we entered."

"You might try going north," said Bess.

"Well, we will," said Ned. "Come on. There'll be paths enough to choose from."

We went on to where the passages branched and fol-

lowed the northerly one, but after going a hundred feet the path grew so steep that I urged my companions to be cautious.

"We never took this path," I said. "Be careful, Ned; look sharp, Bess. We don't know where this thing will end."

"I am afraid I do," said Ned, waving his hand. "Look there!"

His torch had burned low and he cast it from him, not a few feet, or even yards, for it suddenly went plunging down, down, down, right over a tremendous precipice.

Then it went out and at the same moment I heard a strange rumble behind us.

"What is that—an earthquake?"

"I'm sure I don't know, but let's go back. This certainly is the wrong path, even if we could go on."

We went back, Ned lighting a fresh torch, but soon after we reached the level again he uttered a surprised exclamation.

"What is the matter?"

"A part of the rock has fallen and cut off our retreat!"

"Then that is the sound we heard?"

"Yes; it is very wet in here and the rock has finally given way. There's no use. A mouse couldn't get through here."

"But we can't go back," I said, putting my hand on the rock, which seemed strangely cold.

"We can't go forward, Art, that's sure enough. We must go back. Perhaps we shall find a path leading alongside the chasm. We can't stay here. We've got to go forward."

"Hello!" I answered.

"Well, what is it?"

"There is saltpetre in this rock. I tasted it."

Ned answered in a tone in which disgust was the greater part:

"Well, I don't see how that is going to help us. I thought you had found the way out."

"But saltpetre is one of the ingredients of gunpowder. We can get sulphur from the volcano, I don't doubt, and it will be easy to make charcoal and there we are. I've studied all about it."

"That's the beauty of having a college education, Bess," said Ned. "Art thinks of making gunpowder when we don't know whether or not we shall ever get out of this wretched hole that I so foolishly led you into."

"You are no more foolish than I was," I answered. "Come, it may be as you say, that there is a path along the precipice. Let us go slowly and cautiously and watch our every step."

I lighted an extra torch and went ahead, picking my way carefully, the extra torch being of great benefit in seeing the path.

Down, down, down we went till at last I found myself nearly to the brink, but at the same moment saw that there was just such a path as Ned had imagined, leading alongside a deep, cup-shaped chasm.

There was room enough and to spare on this path, and we pushed on and on, I on the lookout for some path leading from it.

(To be Continued)

FROM ALL POINTS

Here is a story of how realistic moving pictures affect Texas dogs. The Galveston News is sponsor for it: "So realistic was the moving picture of a dog that a similar animal in the audience jumped on the stage and ran, barking, around the screen after the dog in the picture. Before he could be restrained he demolished the screen."

Human ashes were mailed by parcel post at the St. Louis post-office January 9 to Edwardsville, Ill., where they will be buried in the grave that was dug for Frederick Naumann. Naumann died at Edwardsville, and preparations for the funeral had been made and the grave dug when it was learned that Naumann's will directed that the body be cremated. The body then was brought to the St. Louis crematory.

"To find a record-breaking pearl, sell it for \$500 and then learn of its sale in New York for \$9,000 is enough to make a man lose heart," says John Risley, a farmer boy, in Arkansas last summer. Risley sold his prize to a pearl-buyer from Cotter, who later disposed of it for \$1,000. It was last sold in New York City, where a wealthy young woman is said to have paid \$9,000 for it. The Risley pearl is one and seven-eighths inches in circumference, and is perfect in shape and lustre.

Three million dollars were appropriated December 24 by the directors of the port of Boston for the construction at South Boston of one of the largest drydocks in North America. The drydock will accommodate a ship 1,000 feet in length and 120 feet in breadth. The directors' action followed the reading of a letter from P. A. S. Franklin, vice-president of the White Star Line. Mr. Franklin expressed the willingness of certain steamship companies to unite in paying \$50,000 a year for twenty years to provide for a drydock at this port capable of receiving a steamship of the largest size.

Convicts in the Joliet (Ill.) Penitentiary are receiving much pleasure from a series of moving picture entertainments being given in the institution by Warden E. J. Murphy. When the first of the entertainments was given recently the prisoners, old and young, laughed and applauded like so many children. Hundreds of the men had never before seen a motion picture, having been in the prison for fifteen or twenty years or more. For the first time many of them saw aeroplanes, racing automobiles and modern battleships in motion, and other marks of progress.

In the will of G. Oscar Pfeiffer, of Scarsdale, filed the other day with Surrogate William A. Sawyer, of Westchester County, N. Y., and which disposed of an estate worth \$500,000, there was a clause which directed that any son of his "Who leads a dishonest or unrighteous life, engages in dishonest or unrighteous business, or who lives in riot-

out idleness" shall be cut off from any share in the estate. The will further provides that any son who shall be adjudged a drunkard in the legal sense of the word shall not share in the property. In such case any share of such a son shall go to the family of such son. All of the estate goes to the wife, Lois H. Pfeiffer, and the children, with the exception of \$5,000 each to the testator's nieces, Pauline A. Oehler and Emma T. Pfeiffer. Mrs. Pfeiffer and James G. Cannon, of Scarsdale, president of the Fourth National Bank, of this city, are the executors. Mr. Pfeiffer had lived a retired life for several years. During the Civil War he was an architect at the Brooklyn Navy Yard, and later he had ship-designing offices here. A large part of his property consists of ranches in Wyoming.

Iron Man Joe McGinnity was back in Newark spending the holidays and arranging to move from that city to Tacoma, Wash., where his baseball interests now are. McGinnity, with his brother-in-law, Frank Redpath, purchased the Tacoma club after he sold his interests in the Newark Indians.

McGinnity is highly pleased with the outlook in Tacoma, and he says he is going to start the season right by having the Governor of the State of Washington pitch out the first ball. McGinnity tells with much relish of the fight he had before the meeting of the Northwestern League to get the schedule changed to give Tacoma more home games. He was obliged to talk on the floor for an hour before he gained his point. Last year the Tacoma club had only fifty-eight games at home, and was to have received the same allotment this year. McGinnity wanted it doubled and got it. He also got Memorial Day, Fourth of July and Labor Day. He opens on April 15 and closes September 28. After the league granted McGinnity's request as to schedule he entertained the delegates at a banquet.

Sam Langford knocked out Sam McVey at Sydney, Australia, December 26, in the thirteenth round of one of the fiercest heavyweight battles seen in Australia in years. The negroes had many an old grudge to settle, and from the tap of the gong they fairly jumped at each other, to the wild shouts of the big crowd. In the first round Langford landed lefts and rights with such power that McVey was driven to the ropes by the heavy punishment. In the second and third rounds there was little to choose, but Langford floored his opponent in the fourth with a crashing uppercut to the chin, and from that point McVey was on the defensive. The end came in the thirteenth round, when Langford, after showering his rival with blow after blow, landed a terrific right, which sent McVey crashing to the mat for the full count. By winning Langford earned the heavyweight championship of Australia, as McVey was holder of the title. The men had met in five other bouts, of which Langford won three, lost one and boxed a draw in the other. Langford is thirty-two years old and has been fighting off and on since 1902, usually with marked success.

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ITEMS OF CURRENT NEWS

A sensation has been caused in academic circles, Paris, by the death from morphine poisoning of Rene Bichet, one of the most brilliant graduates from the higher normal college, who was recently appointed professor of French in the Royal College at Budapest. The police say that a college friend, who was a victim of the morphine habit, induced Bichet to try the effects of the drug, and gave him a hypodermic injection, which proved fatal. The student has been arrested, and the police say that a search of his rooms in the college brought to light a forged physician's prescription, through the use of which he obtained the drug.

Virginia has just passed a law taking the robin from the list of game birds. If only the other Southern States—there are six of them where the robin may be shot—would do the same! They will have to, in time. Public opinion in this matter is spreading southward very fast. A bird whose fledgling, ornithologists tell us, eats, in bugs and worms, the equivalent of fourteen feet of caterpillars a day, is of sufficient economic value to insure its protection. Should the bill on migratory birds, now before Congress, become law, the robin will be under the care of the national government and State legislation will not be so necessary.

Now they are fighting the hookworm in the South with moving pictures. Part of Mr. Rockefeller's donation to carry on the campaign against this intestinal disease, which shows itself in most pronounced anæmia, is being used in the production and exhibition of cinematograph pictures illustrating the prevention and cure of this strange malady. A few years ago the public would have been astounded if it had been suggested that the shiftlessness of the "shiftless white-trash" was a disease, but that is exactly what specialists on the subject think to-day. Statistics show that more than a million cures have been effected in ten cities of the South where the campaign with the Rockefeller funds has been carried on. Now, in addition to free medicine, and free lectures on the subject, free moving pictures will help to exterminate the insive hookworms.

Thomas A. Edison, to whom the world probably owes more than to any other living man, intends to revolutionize our educational system with moving pictures. He plans to substitute educational films for text-books in the eight lower grades of the public schools and teach the children as we study nature—through the eye. "To teach children you've got to awaken their minds and keep their interest to the highest pitch," said Mr. Edison in a recent interview. "I intend to try to do away with text-books in the lower grades, substituting in their stead moving pictures. We've got a lot of hieroglyphics—the alphabet. What is there in that to interest a child? When we get moving pictures in the school the child will be so interested that he will hurry to school, for fear he will miss some of the interesting pictures which will hold his interest. It's the natural way to teach—through the eye. It's the way we learn from nature."

JOKES AND JESTS.

Schoolmaster (trying to catch the boys)—How many months have twenty-eight days in them? Smart Boy—All of them!

Missionary—If you are about to kill me, let me sing a hymn. Cannibal—No, sir-ee. No music with meals in this joint.

"Here is where we keep the cows," said the farmer's oldest son to the city beauty on the farm, and she exclaimed: "Oh, how lovely! And which are the cows that give the buttermilk?"

"Who's that, pa?" a little Kansas youngster in the Senate gallery at the Capitol inquired as a magnificent-looking old man rose before the opening of a session. "That," said the father, "is Edward Everett Hale, the chaplain." "Oh," said the boy, "he prays for the Senate, doesn't he?" "Well, no," said the father, "not exactly. He gets up, takes a good look at the Senate and then he prays for the country."

"Golly, but Ise tired!" exclaimed a tall and thin negro, meeting a short and stout friend on Washington street. "What you been doin' to get tired?" demanded the other. "Well," explained the thin one, drawing a deep breath, "over to Brother Smith's dey are measurin' de house for some new carpets. Dey haven't got no yawdstick, and Ise jest ezactly six feet tall. So to oblige Brother Smith Ise been a-layin' down and a-gettin' up all over deir house."

Some years ago the Jones family had an old organ which had been discarded by the young people of the family, and they sold it to a German family living near by. A few days after the sale one of the little German girls came to the house and asked to see the young lady of the house. Upon her going to the door the little girl said: "Mother wants to know if you can come over this afternoon and teach Annie to play on the organ, as we are going to have company to-morrow?"

THE GOLDEN IDOL.

By John Sherman.

The sun went down over the African coast of the Mediterranean, tinting the curling surf beating in on the rocky shore with variegated hues of golden splendor.

In the offing laid the trading schooner Molly Boggs, becalmed, her sails hanging limply on the masts, and not a ripple disturbing the sluggish water at her bow.

Within half a mile was the coast of the island of Pharos, on the northeast point of which arose the ancient lighthouse of the same name, and in back of which stretched the mole, Heptastadium, connecting it with the mainland.

The Molly Boggs had been laden with a miscellaneous cargo, most of which was gone, its place being occupied by the products of Morocco, Algeria, Tunis and Tripoli, taken in exchange.

On the deck of the schooner was a scene of idleness.

A sailor stood at the helm, a group of sun-burned fellows were lounging up forward, and at the mainmast's foot-works on the lee side stood two boys, both about sixteen years of age, conversing.

One was a white boy, and the other a negro.

"So you have been to Alexandria before, have you, Sherry?" asked the white boy to his companion, in surprised tones.

"Yes, sah. I'se been brung up by Captain Boggs on dis yere wessel, Jack Brooks, an' I tole yer, sah, dis am a bad place."

"Ah, here comes Captain Boggs."

The cabin door had opened and a short, bandy-legged man emerged with a pipe in his mouth, his hands in his pockets and a telescope under his arm nearly a yard long.

At this moment Sherry pointed out at the water.

"Looker dar! Wha' yo' call dat, sah?" he queried.

"A boat containing a young woman!" exclaimed Jack.

"An' b'gum, she's agoin' ter board us, too," added the captain.

She had long hair falling down over her shoulders, was attired in a dress of a peculiar fabric, without sleeves, looked very much like a Greek or an Egyptian girl, and wore no veil over her face, as is customary in Egypt.

Her skin was almost copper colored, and as the boat drew closer they saw that she had a wondrously beautiful face.

She made her boat fast and with surprising agility came up on the martingale shrouds to the deck.

Her big black eyes roved around until she distinguished the captain from the rest; then she approached him.

"Are you the captain of this vessel?"

"Yes, ma'am," he replied, with a sudden bow. "What's wantin', ma'am?"

"I saw that your vessel was an American by its flag, and I want to know if you are going anywhere near New York on your return to the United States?"

"That's ther werry port as we hails from, ma'am."

"Then take me to your country."

The captain was astonished at this request.

"Take yer to New York!" he gasped. "This ain't no

passenger vessel, ma'am. An' wot you'd do arter yer gits thar, I don't know."

"In the first place, then, let me inform you I am married."

"Married? Oh! B'gum! An' you're English-spoken, too?"

"Yes; my father was an English merchant—my mother a Greek woman, and we lived in Alexandria since I was born, for my father had his place of business there. Both of my parents recently died of cholera, leaving me alone in the world. A short time ago an American vessel came here to carry away one of two obelisks called Cleopatra's Needles, which King Thotmes III. erected. One of the crew of that vessel is my husband."

"Ah! An' ther lubber sailed away an' lef yer here alone?"

"He did, but it was owing to the rascality of an Egyptian who desired my hand in marriage before I gave my heart to Henry Gordon."

"So Gordon was your husband's name?"

"It was. His rival was Demetrius Soter, a powerful tyrant, living on the mole, in the new Bruchesium near the water. He is a favorite of the khedive, and laid a wicked conspiracy to separate me from my husband, in hopes that I will marry him. On the western side of the city is the Serapeion—the last heathen temple which the Christians stormed in the year 39 and converted into a church. It is now a ruin, but still preserved the pagan deity of gold, called Pasht. The goddess was stolen. Demetrius accused me and my husband of the theft. On the day he and I were to sail I was seized, imprisoned, and my husband fled. After my husband fled in the monolith vessel I was liberated, the charge against me withdrawn, and I returned home only to find my husband had gone away, leaving me, in the supposition that I was killed. To escape the persecutions of my enemy and again meet my husband, I wish to accompany you."

"An' so yer shall, my gal," said the skipper. "But tell me, ma'am, wuz that ere idol really hooked?"

"Demetrius had it taken from the ruined temple by his negroes, and one of them secretly confessed to me where it had been hidden. I went with him and saw it. My enemy had it under his house. The authorities searched in vain for the valuable relic."

"Does anybody in pertickler own that ere golden idol?"

"No. It is simply a relic of antiquity, claimed by the government."

"Then b'gum, ma'am, I'm agoin' ter try ter git it myself."

"I will go with you, but you had best arm yourself."

"Certainly I will, my lass. Now jist go inter my cabin and make yourself comfortable as ye kin till nightfall."

The girl bowed, and a moment later disappeared in the cabin.

As the darkness settled down, lights began to appear along the shore, and the captain went into the cabin where Sherry had prepared a tasteful repast, to which Zuleima—the girl—Jack, and he himself sat down to.

After they arose from the table Boggs got Jack and Sherry and the two sailors together, armed them with muskets and small arms, the boat was made ready, and,

accompanied by the girl, they were rowed toward the island with her boat in tow.

The girl directed them in toward a broad neck of land, and after a while they came in sight of a wide flight of stairs leading up from the water's edge, at the summit of which stood a magnificent pillared house, surrounded by gardens. Zuleima told them it was the abode of her enemy.

Guided now by the land, they had but little difficulty in keeping along, and after they passed the stairs she said:

Row in close to the shore. It is walled up—the water deep."

One hundred yards further on they found a mass of rocks, in which was an aperture, into which Zuleima guided them. They had taken the precaution to bring torches, and leaving the boat they followed the girl into an arched passage. A short walk brought them to what seemed to be a huge cavern, and the girl darted ahead.

The boy went on after the girl with Sherry, when suddenly his foot struck something and he fell. The torch was extinguished—the place wrapped in darkness.

At the same time Jack heard a loud cry from the girl's lips, and Sherry running round in terror.

"Fly!" cried the girl, frantically. "We are discovered!"

"Massa Jack!" shouted Sherry's frightened voice from somewhere in the darkness, and the young clerk scrambled to his feet and hastily lit his torch again with a match. He saw Sherry kneeling on the ground and ran up to him. The negro's arm was outstretched and a terrified expression upon his face, as Jack approached him with his musket in his hand.

Raising the torch, Jack beheld the monstrously ugly idol of which they were in search. Beside it stood Zuleima. The girl was terrified, for back in the darkness loomed the Egyptian, holding her!

They could see that Demetrius was a stalwart, ugly fellow, and in back of him were a dozen blacks, fully armed.

The captain and his men raised their muskets and fired a volley. As he had expected, it frightened their opponents, and they ran helter-skelter for a flight of stone stairs in back.

The girl, finding herself released, ran over to Boggs' party.

"Now's yer time!" exclaimed the captain, jubilantly. "You two run in and carry the idol here afore they gits over it."

The two sailors addressed did so, and came staggering back with the precious burden, amid a shower of spears and a chorus of wild, angry cries from the Egyptians.

They dashed out of the cavern, and reaching the boats they got in and rowed hastily away, towing the idol in the girl's clumsy skiff.

Upon reaching the schooner they got the idol upon the deck, and carrying it down into the hold it was concealed in an empty cask.

This was hardly accomplished, however, when the Molly Boggs was surrounded by a large flotilla of boats.

Hastily arming all his men, they awaited an attack from their enemies, mostly of whom were negroes.

Zuleima was locked in the cabin, out of harm's way, and

as soon as the Egyptians attempted to clamber up on the deck of the schooner they were repelled by a volley from the sailors, under the captain's direction.

Again and again they returned to the assault, only to be driven back by the fire of the determined sailors.

With all sail set the Molly Boggs turned her stern to Pharos Island, and under the stiffening breeze she stood away to the westward at ten knots an hour.

The following day found them far down the coast, out of sight of civilization, and the ugly little idol was brought up on deck and smashed to pieces.

Had it been solid, it would have weighed at least two tons—and those who secured it were sorry it didn't.

All that day Sherry was kept busy melting the pieces into bars in the galley, and when it was finally reduced they packed the precious metal in a box and put it under lock and key, until they reached a port at which it could be sold to best advantage.

The gold was sold at Lisbon, and a much larger remuneration was received for it than they expected.

One-half of it was given to Zuleima, a quarter was divided between the captain, Jack and Sherry, and the rest among the crew.

From Portugal the schooner started for the Azores and thence made her way across the ocean for New York.

After a long trip she arrived safely, and under Jack's guidance the Egyptian girl went to look for her husband.

She was not a little astonished at the new world.

The obelisk had arrived at Central Park, and was in the course of erection, so Jack had no trouble to make inquiries for the man for whom the Egyptian girl had risked so much.

But a sad-disappointment awaited her.

He was lost at sea on the way from Egypt.

The girl keenly felt her loss, and for a long time was very disconsolate; but she found a good friend in Jack, who had resigned from the Molly Boggs. And as the youth fell in love with the dark-skinned widow and she finally grew to reciprocate his affection, Jack married her.

The Molly Boggs is still trading along the African coast with the old captain commanding and Sherry cooking; but they never went near Alexandria again, for fear that they might get into trouble over having carried away the golden idol.

The following is an illustration of the beauties of bureaucratic administration in Germany: It appears that in the Post Office Department at Berlin, if a clerk wishes a new lead pencil, he must turn in to the proper authority the stump of the one that has become too short for further use. In one case a clerk received his new pencil without returning the end of the old one, and before this error was discovered this clerk had been transferred to another office. Shortly after the assumption of his duties at his new post this clerk received an official intimation that he had neglected to turn in his pencil end. By this time, however, the end had disappeared. In order to avoid official reprimand, the resourceful clerk purchased a new pencil, cut off a piece about the length of the missing end, and despatched it to the stationery department. Everybody was accordingly satisfied.

GOOD READING

Spanish royalty is much interested in the announcement that the Infante Alfonso, 11 years old, who has made various ascensions in military aeroplanes, has entered as a pupil of the Aviation School "Cuatrovientos." The boy is a son of the King's sister, Mercedes, Princess of Asturias, and Carlos de Bourbon y Caserta. The Infante Alfonso is a bright little fellow, with more than the usual amount of courage of children of his age. He is never happier than when making short aeroplane trips.

Marcus Cortright, game warden of Pike County, Pa., went over to Sussex County, N. J., January 11, and trapped a Canadian lynx which weighed seventeen pounds. A dead doe which had run against a fence and killed itself was responsible for the trapping of the lynx. The warden discovered the carcass of the doe and around it the footprints of the cat. By baiting several traps with venison the cat was captured and despatched with a revolver by the warden. The lynx was about ten months old.

Marcie E. Sullivan, of New York City, recovered a verdict of \$7,500 recently in the Supreme Court against the New York Telephone Company and Barr Brothers, Fifth avenue merchants. She sued for injuries received to her left leg when she fell through a trap-door in the Barr store. While she was sitting on a stool at the telephone in the Barr store a trap-door was raised. She took a step backward and fell into the cellar. The Court held the proprietor and telephone company liable because both shared in the profits from the telephone booth.

M. A. Johnson, who owns a farm in Straight River Township, Minn., went out there recently to see how things were getting along. He carried a shotgun with him. On arriving at the farm he saw a flock of wild geese lighting in his cornfield. He crawled up near them and took a shot at the flock, killing the leader, a fine old gander. Picking up his game and starting back, he espied a fine fox coming across the field toward him. In a few minutes the fox ran so close that a shot from his shotgun killed the fox.

"The romance of a box of locks," friends of Miss Mary E. Conroy, of Stamford, Conn., called her marriage here to Cloyd Brown, a builder, of Dallas, Texas. It is more than a year since Miss Conroy, in a spirit of fun, slipped her card into a box of locks packed for shipment at the Yale & Towne plant here. Many weeks later she received a letter signed "Cloyd Brown" and telling her the writer had found the card. This was the beginning of a courtship by mail. Photographs were exchanged and the courtship went on. A week ago Mr. Brown came to Stamford to see the young woman, and determined to take her back to Texas as his wife. He met with some opposition at first, it is understood, but eventually had his way.

John Kublick, a Hungarian trapper, was rescued the other day from a haystack in the Big Piece Meadows, which are submerged by the overflow of the Passaic River, N. J. Kublick went out in a canoe to see to his traps and was upset. He got to the haystack and the canoe drifted away. He was soon joined by two exhausted deer that had been caught in the flood. He had with him two muskrats that he had found in his traps, and he became so hungry that he ate them. William Closin saw Kublick's plight and went after him with a rowboat. The deer swam away when they saw the boat coming.

Armed with a slung-shot, Patrolman Spivey will be delegated to break up gangs of fighting cats in Portland, Oregon. Reports over the telephone and letters to Acting-Chief Slover have denounced the felines as sleep-robbers and general nuisances, and because the police have no authority to shoot the animals the war-gear of childhood will be brought into play. Spivey made quite a record two years ago when on a fashionable residence beat on the East Side. There, nightly yowlings were followed by reports to the police. Spivey decided to clean up his beat without help and made a slung-shot, arming himself with buck-shot. The beat was soon clean, for Spiver was an expert marksman.

Postmaster Doores has received a letter from Oklahoma City, signed by "William H. Gardner," who says he was kidnapped in Bowling Green fifty-six years ago by a miner named Alexander Huskey. "Gardner" states that the name signed is one given him by law, and that he is ignorant of who he is. He requests that the records be examined to discover the name of any child who disappeared about that time. "In other words," he writes, "I want to know who I am." There is no record in the county of a boy being kidnapped at that time.

Americans accustomed to the enormous output and accurate work of their automatic machinery are often amazed at the conservatism of foreign motor car manufacturers who prefer the employment of hand labor, but a point that is often overlooked is the influence of the wage scale on this preference. Where the American manufacturer pays \$20, \$25, \$50, or more, in England the most skilled and industrious artisan is not able to get over \$14.60, or \$15 as his weekly wage. Consul Stead, of Nottingham, who has investigated conditions in the British motor manufacturing industry, says: "Boys of sixteen years start at \$1.46 per week to learn the trade and receive a yearly raise of 48 cents per week until grown, when, at twenty-one years they make \$6.08 per week as lower man's wages. The medium mechanic who understands the mathematics of his trade earns \$9.73 to \$12.16 per week.

ARTICLES OF ALL KINDS

UNEARTH'S A VALUABLE STATUE.

While ploughing in a field near Bassano di Sutri, forty miles from Rome, Italy, a peasant unearthed a magnificent bronze statue representing a youthful Apollo. The news reached Rome, and several dealers in antiquities hurried to the little town only to find that they had been forestalled by a government official, who secured the statue for \$6,000. Its value is believed to be \$100,000. The statue belongs to the best period of Greco-Roman art.

\$40,571,543 FOR GEMS.

Next to discussing the high cost of living, the acquisition of jewelry seems to have been America's chief pastime in the last year. Statistics compiled by William B. Treadwell, jewelry examiner at the Appraisers' Stores, show that the total value of importations at this port alone amounted in 1912 to more than \$40,571,543.

The value of cut stones and pearls brought into port is set at \$31,16,389; the uncut gems, principally diamonds, at \$9,555,154. The total imports for the country last year Mr. Treadwell estimated at \$42,000,000, about 96 per cent. of the gem supply being brought in at this port.

According to Mr. Treadwell's figures, importations in December reached \$2,521,866, of which \$1,798,439 were cut precious stones and pearls, and \$723,427 were uncut gems. In December, 1911, cut gems and pearls imported were valued at \$1,436,532 and the uncut stones were worth \$1,085,638.

The biggest month for importations last year was July, when \$5,547,116 worth of precious stones were passed by the appraisers. Every other month, except February, March and December, the total was well above \$3,000,000. The big increase in the value of gems is attested by figures which show that while the sales for the year amounted to more than \$3,000,000 more than in 1911 there was a much smaller number of carats sold.

Mr. Treadwell says that in the twelve months ended with December there has been a noticeable increase in the demand for sapphires and emeralds. Rubies have not been so popular in preceding years.

NEW PARCEL POSTS GETS MANY FREAK SHIPMENTS.

Two days' operation of the new parcel post system has loaded post offices with freak shipments, thousands of packages so improperly wrapped or packed that they cannot be transported and thousands of others stamped with ordinary postage in place of the distinctive parcel post stamps.

Most of the freaks have gone through, but the improperly mailed articles will have to take the slow course through the dead letter office.

Eggs from Long Island, 300 miles away, passed through the local post office safely. Officials said many other fragile shipments, properly packed, were being handled without mishap all over the country. They predict the new service will have a phenomenal growth.

Secretary of Agriculture Wilson is not convinced that

the new service will materially affect the "high cost of living."

"A cheapening of farmers' costs of marketing," he said, "will naturally result in gain to the producer rather than to the consumer. If the consumer is to benefit by changes in the costs of distribution, it seems probable that he must do so by cheapening or eliminating costs at his end of the chain of distribution."

The Secretary advocates co-operative buying as one means of reducing costs and also recommends reforms in the methods of local distribution.

Denver and Chicago are the cities that are already being talked of for the 1913 convention and races of the Federation of American Motor Cyclists which are expected to be held in July. Chicago is an active candidate for the event, but Denver has been strongly canvassing and will contend that the Far West should be recognized.

Should the latter city get the convention it is probable that a big motor cycle tour from Kansas City to the convention city will be planned. An easy schedule, from 75 to 100 miles a day, could be arranged for those who care to travel over the Santa Fe or Golden Belt route.

WOMEN MAY FENCE AGAIN.

Plans are being arranged for a return fencing-match between Mrs. H. W. Dewar, of Philadelphia, and the Baroness A. de Meyer, of England, for the woman's amateur championship of the world. The Baroness arrived in this country recently and it is now thought that the plans will be completed.

In the first match between the two women experts in this city Mrs. Dewar carried off the honors of the match, which was contested at the Colony Club. Baroness de Meyer is the recognized woman champion of Europe, but lost the world's title in the New York match, and is anxious for a return contest for an opportunity to regain the premier honors.

Mrs. Dewar has already consented to a return match, and A. J. Drexel Biddle, the millionaire sportsman of the Quaker City, has offered a silver trophy for the winner. As the winner of their last contest, Mrs. Dewar has the privilege of naming the place for the coming match, and has selected Philadelphia.

Mr. Biddle will engage the ballroom of the Bellevue-Stratford as the place for the contest, in order that the many local enthusiasts may witness it. It now rests with the Baroness if there is to be another match.

"If Baroness de Meyer wishes to fence me again, I shall be most happy to accept the honor at any time," said Mrs. Dewar. "Of course, I would prefer to meet the Baroness in Philadelphia," she continued, "but if it is impossible I would then be willing to combat in New York, or any other city. I do not believe, however, that the Baroness would have any choice of cities if she really desired to arrange another match with me."



GIANT SAW PUZZLE.

This puzzle contains twenty-one pieces of wood nicely finished; take them apart and put them together same as illustrated. Everybody would like to try it, as it is very fascinating. Price, by mail, postpaid, 25c. each.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

DELUSION TRICK.

A magic little box in three parts that is very mystifying to those not in the trick. A coin placed on a piece of paper disappears by dropping a nickel ring around it from the magic box. Made of hard wood two inches in diameter. Price, 12c.

M. V. GALLIGAN, 419 W. 56th St., N. Y.

ITCH POWDER.

Gez whiz! What fun you can have with this stuff. Moisten the tip of your finger, tap it on the contents of the box, and a little bit will stick. Then shake hands with your friend, or drop a speck down his back. In a minute he will feel as if he had the seven years' itch. It

will make him scratch, roar, squirm and make faces. But it is perfectly harmless, as it is made from the seeds of wild roses. The horrible itch stops in a few minutes, or can be checked immediately by rubbing the spot with a wet cloth. While it is working, you will be apt to laugh your suspender buttons off. The best joke of all. Price 10 cents a box, by mail, postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

COMICAL RUBBER STAMPS.

A complete set of five grotesque little people made of indestructible rubber mounted on black walnut blocks. The figures consist of Policeman, Chinaman, and other laughable figures as shown in pictures. As each figure is mounted on a separate block, any boy can set up a regular parade or circus by printing the figures in different positions. With each set of figures we send a bottle of colored ink, an ink pad and full instructions. Children can stamp these pictures on their toys, picture books, writing paper and envelopes, and they are without doubt the most amusing and entertaining novelty gotten up in years. Price of the complete set of Rubber Stamps, with ink and ink pad, only 10c., 3 sets for 25c., one dozen 90c., by mail postpaid.

L. Senarens, 347 Winthrop St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

JUMPING TELESCOPE.



This is an oblong tube in exact imitation of a telescope. By looking through it, reveals one highly magnified picture of a dancer or other subject. It contains on the side a button, which the victim is told to press for a change of picture. Instead of another picture appearing, the entire inside part shoots out, as shown in illustration. It is entirely harmless, but gives the victim a genuine scare.

Price, 15c. each; 2 for 25c. by mail, postpaid. WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

THE FLUTOPHONE.



A new musical instrument, producing the sweetest dulcet tones of the flute. The upper part of the instrument is placed in the mouth, the lips covering the openings in the centre. Then by blowing gently upon it you can play any tune desired as easily as whistling. But little practice is required to become a finished player. It is made entirely of metal, and will last a lifetime. We send full instructions with each instrument. Price, 15c., or 2 for 25c., by mail, postpaid.

A. A. WARFORD, 16 Hart St., Brooklyn, N. Y.



Sure Fire
Accuracy
Penetration

The World's Record Holders

Remington-UMC .22 cal. cartridges have broken two records in two years.

The present world's 100-shot gallery record, 2484 ex 2500, held by Arthur Flubalek was made with these hard hitting .22's.

They will help you, too, to break your best shooting records.

Remington-UMC .22's are made, too, with hollow point bullets. This increases their shocking and killing power.

Remington-UMC—the perfect shooting combination

REMINGTON ARMS-UNION METALLIC CARTRIDGE CO.

299 Broadway New York City

JAPANESE WATER FLOWERS



Without exception, the most beautiful and interesting things on the market. They consist of a dozen dried-up sprigs, neatly encased in handsomely decorated envelopes, just as they are imported from Japan. Place one sprig in a bowl of water, and it begins to exude various bright tints. Then it slowly opens out into various shapes of exquisite flowers. They are of all colors of the rainbow. It is very amusing to watch them take form.

Small size, price 5 cents; large size, 10 cents a package, by mail, postpaid.

M. V. GALLIGAN, 419 W. 56th St., N. Y.

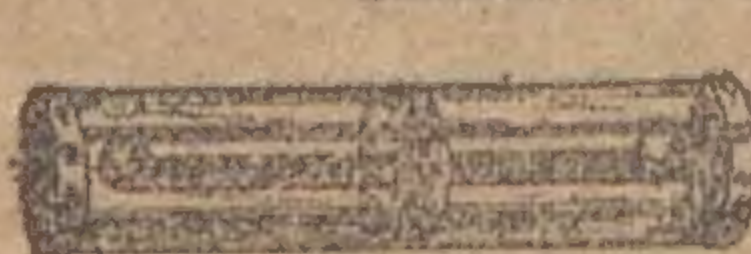
JAPANESE TRICK KNIFE.



You can show the knife and instantly draw it across your finger, apparently cutting deep into the flesh. The red blood appears on the blade of the knife, giving a startling effect to the spectators. The knife is removed and the finger is found in good condition. Quite an effective illusion. Price 10c. each by mail.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

SEE-SAW PUZZLE.



The most absorbing puzzle seen for years. The kind you sit up half the night to do. The puzzle is to get both balls, one in each pocket.

Price, 10c.; 3 for 25c. by mail, postpaid. M. V. GALLIGAN, 419 W. 56th St., N. Y.

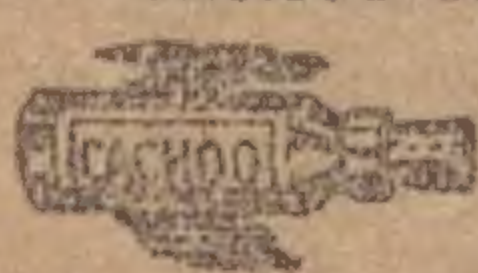
SURPRISE KINEMATOGRAPH.



The greatest hit of the season! It consists of a small metal, nicked tube, with a lens eye view, which shows a pretty ballet girl in tights. Hand it to a friend, who will be delighted with the first picture; tell him to turn the screw in center of instrument to change the views, when a stream of water squirts into his face, much to his disgust. Anyone who has not seen this kinematograph in operation is sure to be caught every time. The instrument can be refilled with water in an instant, ready for the next customer. Price 25c. by mail, postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

CACHOO OR SNEEZING POWDER.



The greatest fun-maker of them all. A small amount of this powder, when blown in a room, will cause everyone to sneeze without anyone knowing where it comes from. It is very light, will float in the air for some time, and penetrate every nook and corner of a room. It is perfectly harmless. Cachoo is put up in bottles, and one bottle contains enough to be used from 10 to 15 times. Price, by mail, 10c. each; 3 for 25c. WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.



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We ship on approval without a cent deposit, freight prepaid. DON'T PAY A CENT if you are not satisfied after using the bicycle 10 days.

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Tires, Coaster - Brake rear wheels, lamps, sundries at half usual prices. Mead Cycle Co. Dept. N188 Chicago

LOTS OF FUN FOR A DIME



Ventriloquist Double Throat

Fits roof of mouth; always invisible; greatest thing yet. Astonish and mystify your friends. Neigh like a horse; whine like a puppy; sing like a canary, and imitate birds and beasts of the field and forest. Loads of fun. Wonderful invention. Thousands sold. Price: only 10 cents; 4 for 25 cents, or 12 for 50 cents. Double Throat Co., Dpt. K Frenchtown, N. J.

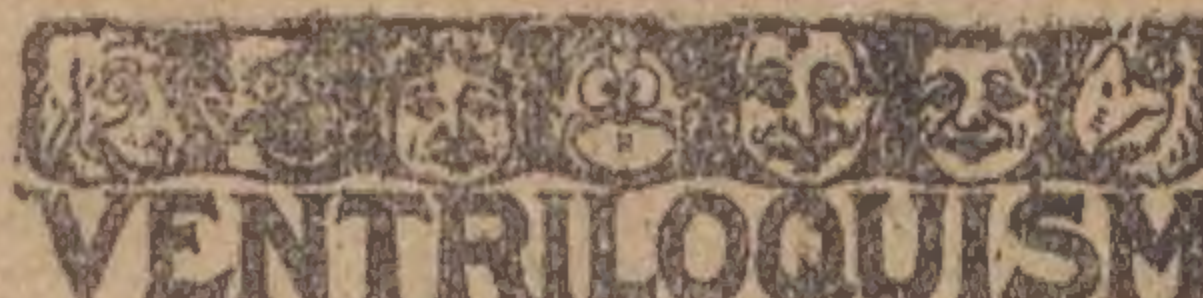


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Become a magician and have the people in your vicinity talk about you being a wonder. Start now and learn something in magic. Magic taught by mail. Magic catalogue ten cents. Write to-day.

GILBERT NOVELTY CO.,

Morgan Park, Ill.



Almost anyone can learn it at home. Small cost. Send to-day 2-cent stamp for particulars and proof. O. A. SMITH, Room 1970 - 823 Bigelow St., Peoria, Ill.



FREE BLUE ENAMELLED FLAG PIN.

Any letter hand engraved, and a catalog of Badge Pins, Jewelry, Tricks, Jokes and Puzzles. Send TWO cents to pay for postage and handling.

BEVERLY NOVELTY CO.,

208J Beverly Road, Brooklyn, N. Y.



TEN BOOKS FOR 10 CENTS

1-Big Joke Book. 2-Book on Magic. 3-Book on Toy Making. 4-Book on Courtship. 5-Bass Ball Book. 6-Dream Book & Fortune Teller. 7-Book Letter Writer. 8-Cook Book. 9-Home Entertainer. 10-White Slave Story Book. All the above by mail for 10 cents. Address, C. E. KING CO., Andover, Ohio.

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GOOD LUCK BANKS.

Ornamental as well as useful. Made of highly nickel-plated brass. It holds just One Dollar. When filled it opens itself. Remains locked until refilled. Can be used as a watchcharm. Money refunded if not satisfied. Price, 10c. by mail.

L. Senarens, 347 Winthrop St., Brooklyn, N. Y.



NAIL PUZZLE.

Made of 2 metal nails linked together. Keeps folks guessing; easy to take them apart when you know how. Directions with every one.

Price, 6c., postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

VANISHING CIGAR.



This cigar is made in exact imitation of a good one. It is held by a rubber cord which, with the attached safety pin, is fastened on the inside of the sleeve. When offered to a friend, as it is about to be taken, it will instantly disappear.

Price, 10c. each by mail, postpaid.

C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.

GOOD LUCK PUZZLE.



It consists of three horseshoes fastened together. Only a very clever person can take off the closed horseshoe from the two linked horseshoes. But it can be done in a moment when the secret is known. Price, by mail, 10c. each.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

ROUGH RIDER DISC PISTOLS.



Made of nicely colored wood 5 1/4 inches long. The power is furnished by rubber bands. Ten discs of cardboard with each pistol. Price, 6c. each, postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

IMITATION GIANT DIAMONDS.



Diamond rings or studs of half-inch and one inch in diameter are heard of in stories only. We have them imitated by prodigious sparkling stones which will deceive the glance of any spectator. Price by mail, postpaid, small size, 25c. each; large size, 35c. each.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

MAGIC PUZZLE KEYS.



Two keys interlocked in such a manner it seems impossible to separate them, but when learned it is easily done.

Price, 6c., postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

THE JUMPING FROG.



This little novelty creates a world of laughter. Its chief attractiveness is that it takes a few seconds before leaping high in the air, so that when set, very innocently along side of an unsuspecting person, he is suddenly startled by the wonderful activity of this frog. Price, 15c. each by mail postpaid.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

ALUMINUM DRINKING CUPS.



These handsome little cups are very handy in size, do not leak, and are Satin finished. When compressed, can be carried in the vest pocket. They hold a good quantity of liquid, and are very strong, light, yet durable. Price, 14c. each, postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

SURPRISE PERFUME BOTTLE.

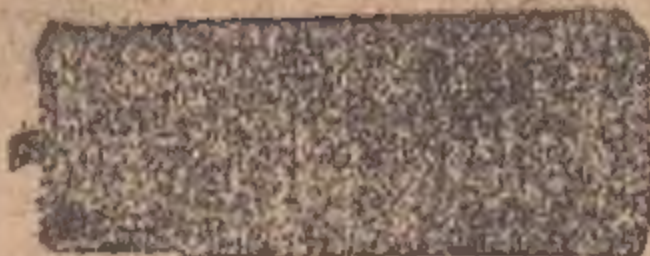


Those in the joke may freely smell the perfume in the bottle, but the uninitiated, on removing the cork will receive the contents in his hands. This is a simple and clever joke.

Price, 10c. each by mail, postpaid; 3 for 25c.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

THE MAGIC CIGAR CASE.



A beautiful and perfect cigar case, made of imitation alligator and seal skin leather, worth a quarter as a cigar case alone. It can be shown full of cigars and instantly handed to a person, who, upon opening it, finds only an empty case. The box has a secret spring and a double case, and can be operated only by one in the secret. Full printed instructions sent with each case. Every smoker should have one. Price, 20c.; 2 for 35c. by mail, postpaid; one dozen by express, \$1.50.

C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.

NORWEGIAN MOUSE.



A very large gray mouse, measuring 8 inches from tip of nose to end of tail. The body of mouse is hollow. Place your first finger in his body, and then by moving your finger up and down, the mouse appears to be running up your sleeve. Enter a room where there are ladies, with the mouse running up your sleeve, and you will see a rapid scattering of the fair sex. Many practical jokes can be perpetrated with this small rodent.

Price, 10c.; 3 for 25c. mailed, postpaid.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

A NEW SQUIRT BADGE.



Great fun for the million! Wear it in your buttonhole and then press the bulb and watch the other fellow run.

Price, 14c.

C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St. New York City.

THE ELK HEAD PUZZLE.



Just out, and one of the most fascinating puzzles on the market. The stunt is to separate the antlers and rejoin them. It looks easy, but try it and you will admit that it is without exception the best puzzle you have ever seen. You can't leave it alone. Made of silvered metal.

Price, 12c.; 3 for 30c., sent by mail, postpaid.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

MARBLE VASE.



A clever and puzzling effect, easy to do; the apparatus can be minutely examined. Effect: A marble can be made to pass from the hand into the closed vase, which a moment before was shown empty. This is a beautiful enameled turned wood vase.

Price, 20c.

M. V. GALLIGAN, 419 W. 56th St., N. Y.

THE MAGNETIC TOP.



A handsome metal, highly magnetized toy. A horseshoe and a spiral wire furnished with each top. When spun next to the wires, they make the most surprising movements. You can make wires of different shapes and get the most peculiar effects. Price, 5c., postpaid.

L. Senarens, 347 Winthrop St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

THE CROWN STYLO.

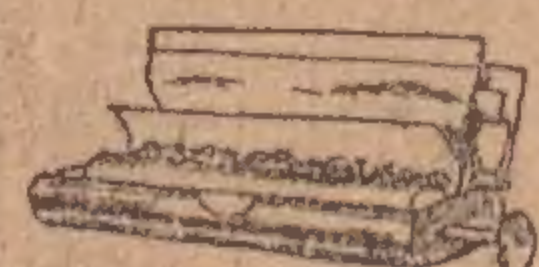


Made of aluminum, satin finish, guaranteed not to leak. This stylographic ink pen is made on a new plan. It cannot corrode and will outlast and outclass any similar pen on the market. It is a splendid writer, and is easily kept in order. Each one packed with a filler, and a clip to hold it in your vest pocket.

Price, 25c. each, postpaid.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

RAPID CIGARETTE MAKER.



This little article should be in the pocket of every smoker. With it a perfect cigarette can be made in ten seconds. You will find them equal in appearance and far superior in quality to commercial ones, at less than a quarter of the cost. With our cigarette maker in your possession, you can smoke a pipe or cigarette at pleasure, as it's just as easy to roll a cigarette as to fill a pipe. Every part of the cigarette maker is handsomely nickel-plated. Price, 15c., or 3 for 40c. by mail, postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

LINK THE LINK PUZZLE.



The sensation of the day. Pronounced by all, the most baffling and scientific novelty out. Thousands have worked at it for hours without mastering it, still it can be done in two seconds by giving the links the proper twist, but unless you know how, the harder you twist them the tighter they grow. Price, 6c.; 3 for 15c.; one dozen, 50c., by mail, postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

WINDOW SMASHERS.



The greatest sensation, just from Paris. A most wonderful effect of a smashing, breaking, falling pane of glass. It will electrify everybody. When you come home, slam the door shut and at the same time throw the discs to the floor. Every pane of glass in the house will at once seem to have been shattered. Price, by mail, postpaid, 35c., a set of six plates.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

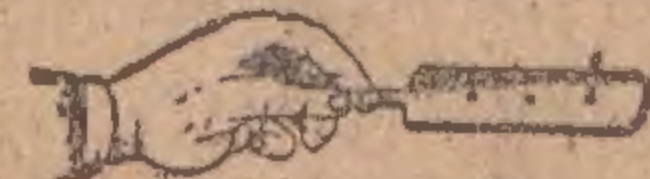
THE FIGHTING ROOSTERS.



A full blooded pair of fighting game cocks. These illiputian fighters have real feathers, yellow legs and fiery red combs, their movements when fighting are perfectly natural and lifelike, and the secret of their movements is known only to the operator, who can cause them to battle with each other as often and as long as desired. Independent of their fighting proclivities they make very pretty mantel ornaments. Price for the pair in a strong box, 10c.; 3 pairs for 25c. by mail, postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

THE PEG JUMPER.



A very effective pocket trick, easily to be performed by any one. A miniature paddle is shown. Central holes are drilled through it. A wooden peg is inside of the upper hole. Showing now both sides of the paddle, the performer causes, by simply breathing upon it, the peg to leave the upper hole, and appear in the middle one. Then it jumps to the lower hole, back to the middle one, and lastly to the upper hole. Both sides of the paddle are repeatedly shown.

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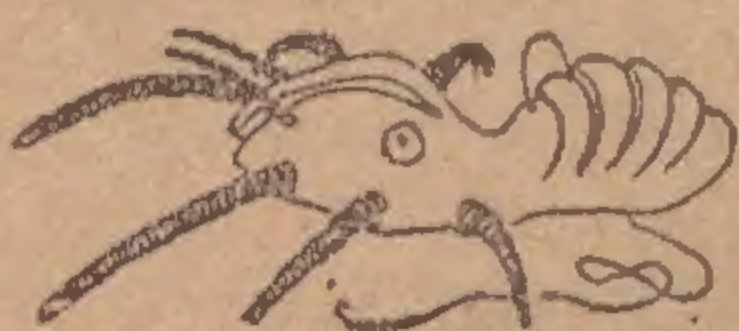
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